
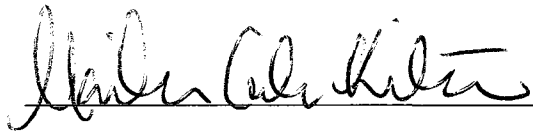


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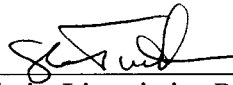
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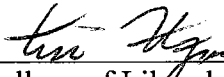


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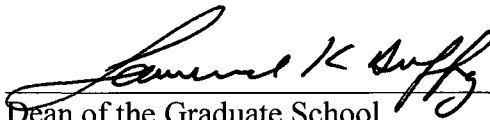


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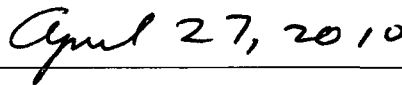
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Date



A PARENT'S CHOICE

Presented to the Faculty  
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Jill Hoffman, B.Ed.

Fairbanks, Alaska

May 2010

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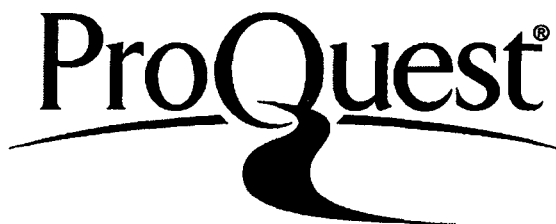
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### **Abstract**

In one rural Alaska school district, parents have a choice to place their child in an English only school or a Yup'ik immersion school. In the English only school, all subjects are taught in English. In the dual immersion school, English is introduced at third grade and progressively increases with each grade level until the sixth grade, when students exit the program. The researcher will seek to find why parents choose to place their child in the English only school or in the Yup'ik immersion school. This inquiry is to help the researcher understand the thoughts and perceptions that are being held by parents and members in the community about each of the schools.

The study will use qualitative research methodology that includes questionnaires and personal interviews to find out the thoughts and feelings that are being held by the parents. This research seeks to find the reasons why parents choose one school over the other. After reviewing the questionnaires, the researcher will select five parents from each school with various backgrounds to interview. The researcher will conduct ethnographic interviews designed to elicit more in-depth information. The interviews will be coded and emergent themes identified. Through data analysis, the researcher hopes to discover the reasons why parents are choosing each of the schools.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

One of the most important decisions that parents have to make in their child's education is where their child will go to school. In the Lower Kuskokwim School District, most of the rural schools do not offer a choice of school due to the small population of each village. Each village typically has only one school that services K-12 students. However, in Bethel, since the opening of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik in 1994, parents now have a choice between Mikelgnuut Elitnaurvik (ME), an English-only school and Ayaprun Elitnaurvik (AE), a Yup'ik immersion school.

Each school has its own philosophy, especially when it relates to the teaching of language and culture. ME School teaches English all day, with Yup'ik classes once a week for thirty minutes where students sing, dance, and learn some basic Yup'ik vocabulary. The mission of ME School is for students to read, write, and do mathematics all in English.

The mission of the Bethel Public Schools is to continually promote excellence in education by maintaining a partnership between parents, schools and community, and integrating the unique cultural aspects of the region and community into the school systems, while requiring the highest academic standards.

The education of our children is the responsibility of the entire community. By working together as an Educational Family, we will be able to meet the needs of our students during the present and prepare them for their future.

Ayaprun Elitnaurvik School is a K-6 immersion school that teaches Yup'ik all day, and begins to introduce English in the third grade. The mission of AE School is for students to learn how to read, write, and learn math all in Yup'ik with the integration of language and cultural values.

OUR MISSION is to help strengthen Yup'ik language and culture, to promote understanding of cultural differences, to enhance one's own cultural identity and to accept that of others.

*Why is this important to me?*

As a parent of three children, I went through a process of change, growth, and identity, when deciding to place my two sons in school. Ayaprun Elitnaurvik had been open for a couple years prior to my eldest son entering kindergarten. However, I chose to place him at the English-only school [ME] because I thought that mastering another language would confuse and possibly hinder his chances at passing the standardized tests later on in third grade. I also thought that he might have a difficult time learning a second language because he had a short attention span and might not be able to focus and learn the Yup'ik language. I was also a teacher at ME school, and felt more

comfortable with him going to the same school that I worked in. Two years later, it was time to place our youngest boy in school, so I began to do some research and learned about the cognitive benefits that coincide with bilingualism (e.g. see pg. 20 for further discussion). By then, Ayaprun Elitnaurvik had also established itself as a school, with a good reputation as a language model school and was receiving a lot of positive attention in the community. I also realized the importance of him learning Yup'ik as a second language, along with being in a school that supports the Yup'ik values and traditions. I believed that learning Yup'ik would also benefit him by instilling the values through the language and culture and strengthen his identity.

It was exciting to see my youngest son learn Yup'ik. I was very proud of him. Then slowly I began to feel frustrated because I couldn't speak the language with him or help him with his homework. I then became aware of the Western influences that had taken place in my family history of schooling and questioned how I ended up to be monolingual when both my parents (Yup'ik and Spanish) were speakers of their native language. Growing up, I grew up and fit in with the mainstream culture because that was what surrounded me at school and at home. I never really felt completely Yup'ik or completely Spanish. I was a mixed breed with minor influences of both cultures integrated into one, with my primary language being English. My parents were both raised to believe that English was the avenue to success and doing well in school. I am here today because of that strong belief and a proud product of our Westernized school system.

The longer my second son was in Ayaprun, the more I began to realize that the social factors outweigh the cognitive factors when it comes to dealing with his cultural identity and self-esteem. I know my son will be successful no matter what he chooses to be in life. The cognitive benefits are convincing and encouraging, but they are only a small reason why I placed my son at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik. I want his education to help define who he is through learning the language and culture. I want him to realize the importance of being able to speak the language of his great-grandparents. I want him to learn the language because it is a part of who he is. I want him to feel proud to be a Yup'ik male speaker in this generation. It has been an incredible process to see him grow into the person he is today after seven years in the program. The first time I saw him confidently singing a Yup'ik song while beating the drum in kindergarten, it brought tears to my eyes. I knew right then and there that we had made the right decision to place him in the immersion school. He can speak both Yup'ik and English and is a wonderful product of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik.

### *Summary of thesis*

In this thesis, I have tried to understand why parents in the town of Bethel choose to send their children to an English medium public school (ME) or a Yup'ik immersion charter school (Ayaprun Elitnaurvik). In Chapter 2, I will discuss the literature on parental choice in schooling, the constraints and complexity of choice, cognitive and social benefits of bilingualism, and views held by parents of children who attend bilingual schools. In Chapter 3, I will provide an overview of my research



methodology as well as the setting, participants, data analysis framework, and the limitations of my research. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the findings from my research. Some of the key findings include the different ways parents from each school define success. Two themes that emerged from the Ayaprun parents included learning as a process and having a strong Yup'ik identity. Success related to happiness, identity, and strong ties to the family and community. Two themes that emerged from the ME parents included learning as a product and doing well in school academically. The ME parents' view of success related only to school and doing well academically. When discussing the role of the school in the education of a child, Ayaprun parents felt that the school's role goes beyond the teaching of academics, but involves teaching the whole child. All of the ME parents felt that the primary role of the school is to teach academics. When discussing the role of the home in the education of a child, there was little consensus among the parents as a whole on any of the themes, with little or no difference in opinion between the ME and Ayaprun parents. All of the parents are in agreement that the culture should be taught at home and that it should include subsistence and other traditional activities. Some parents included language with culture, while others didn't mention it. When discussing bilingualism, the majority of the Ayaprun and ME parents did not feel that bilingualism holds a child back from learning. However, there is evidence that parents from both schools are generally uncertain about whether bilingualism is equally possible for everyone. In the final chapter, I will revisit my findings and discuss what all of this means to me and what I

feel is important to pass on to the next generation of parents' who have to make the same choice that I did.

My hope is that parents become familiar with literature that discusses the language shift that is happening here in our Yukon-Kuskokwim region and why it is happening (Fishman, 1991; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; McCarty, 2003; Wyman et al., 2009).

I also hope that parents become strong advocates for the language by passing the language on to their children. I would like to see parents become more politically involved by attending Advisory School Board meetings and working with the schools to promote bilingualism so that language shift will not occur. We also need to be informed about the politics that are involved in the decisions that are being made about the standard curriculum that often has no relevance to who we are as Yup'ik people and begin to question the way things are done from the top-down and start to advocate for curriculum that aligns more closely to our culture and traditions so that our children feel proud of who they are. That is my hope and desire for all the new parents who believe in passing on our culture, language, and traditions.

### *Outstanding questions*

Some questions that I still have after this research deal more with community planning issues and ways to promote the Yup'ik language and raising its status here in Bethel. I wonder how the community and the majority language are impacting the Yup'ik speakers here in Bethel and the surrounding villages. I wonder about how Yup'ik

speaking parents who have children in the program can be more involved in promoting the use of the language and establishing cultural pride. I wonder how we can find more ways to make parents aware of the social and cognitive benefits that are associated with bilingualism so they are making informed decisions when placing their child in the English or Yup'ik School.

After considering these questions, I hope to continue my research so that I can be a stronger advocate for the promotion of our language. Parents should not be so concerned about NCLB and passing the English tests, but be more concerned about building their child's identity through the language and culture. I want people to realize that their kids can be bilingual and successful in both worlds and that they do not have to compromise giving up their heritage language to learn the dominant language. They can do both if they are involved and committed to instilling the language at home, in the schools, and in the community if that is what is desired.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

What generally drives parental choice in schooling? This is the question that I had to answer in order to understand school choice in general before I could relate it back to my research question of parents' reasons for choosing an English-only school or a Yup'ik immersion school. I have divided the literature review into three parts: school choice, limitations on choice, and bilingualism. In the first part of the literature review, I will discuss the broad issues of school choice, including: how parents find information about the schools; the characteristics of the parents who choose; the reasons behind their selection of a school, as well as the phenomenon of active and non-choosers. In the second part of the literature review, I will discuss the concept of choice, including: the constraints on school choice as well as the nature of choice itself. In the third part of the literature review, I will discuss bilingualism and choice, including: the nature of bilingualism, the positive cognitive effects of bilingualism; the positive social effects of learning a heritage language; and the nature of school choice as it relates to bilingual schooling.

### *Part 1: School Choice*

#### *How do parents find information about schools?*

According to Goldring and Philips (2008), parents rely on both social (friends, family, co-workers, etc) and formal (websites, meetings, newsletters, pamphlets, test scores, etc.) networks to inform their choices. Of these, the social network is the most

important source of information (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007) and “few parents of any social class appear willing to acquire the information necessary to make active and informed educational choices” (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 215).

According to Lake and Hill (2006) charter parents are more likely than other public school parents to rely on formal rather than social network information. Private school parents, on the other hand, are more likely to rely on family or personal networks (p. 6). While urban parents care about the academic quality and performance of schools, they tend to rely on their own observations of the school in action and the word of mouth reputation of the school among other parents with similar concerns, values, or experiences (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007, p. 61). Similarly Holme (2002, as cited by Bell, 2009, p. 294) found that White, middle-class and upper middle-class parents’ school selections relied on the reputations of schools rather than academic data such as test scores or type of curriculum. Although social networks are an important source of information, “[t]he opinions of friends and others ...may not provide a good foundation on which to base educational choices” (Lacieren-Paquet & Brantley, 2008, p.14). Choices about charter schools seem to vary depending on social, linguistic, and economic factors.

#### *Characteristics of parents who choose*

Ninety percent of parents choosing charter schools are female (Lake & Hill, 2006). They are not any richer or better educated than other parents who exercise school

choice. While they may be more likely to use school websites as a source of information (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007, p. 58) they otherwise gather information about schools in much the same way as other parents by visiting schools, talking with parents, and reviewing brochures. In short, charter school parents largely resemble traditional public school parents in terms of how they search for a school for their child (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007, p. 58). However, Lake and Hill (2006) state that charter parents in their study were more likely than other parents to use school websites. They also were happier with the results of their choice than parents who picked non-charter public options (p. 2-7).

Parents choosing private schools tend to have a higher income and level of education (Buddin, Corders & Kirby, 1998 as cited in Goldring & Phillips, 2008). These parents tend to choose private schools for their curriculum and academic emphasis, discipline, and safety (Bauch 1988; Erickson 1986; Kraushaar, 1972; as cited by Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 210). Most students in private schools are in religious institutions. They are more likely to be White (Long & Toma, 1988 as cited by Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 212), non Hispanic, and to come from homes in which there are two parents (Lacireno-Paquet & Brantley, 2008, p. 5). Baptists are much more likely to home school than those of other religious affiliations and at a significantly higher percentage than their share of the public and private school market (Lacireno-Paquet & Brantley, 2008, p. 9).

The lower the education of the parent, the more likely the parent was to report that academic quality was the most important feature in the school choice (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007). However, low-income parents put more trust in teachers and were less likely to visit schools than their higher-income counterparts (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007). In addition, parents with more education were more likely to report that they made a choice on the basis of the school's student body and the fact that their child had 'special' characteristics that influenced their final decision (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007 p. 50).

#### *Reasons for school choice*

According to Bell (2009) an overwhelming number of parents cited holistic and academic reasons as primary reasons for selecting a school. Parents also cited logistical reasons for choosing a school. Holistic refers to the social well-being of the child and whether they are happy at school. Academic factors refer to the concerns that related to the teaching and learning in the classroom. These factors include test scores, quality of curriculum, and experienced teachers. The logistical reasons pertain to location, transportation, and cost issues. Bell (2009) also notes that race plays an important role in the choice sets of parents. Cooper (2007) also discusses racial factors and how race, class, and gender factors influence school choice in her literature (p. 507).

### Holistic factors

Lake and Hill (2006) report that private school parents more often name school culture (environment and safety, values) as their most important factor in picking a school (36 percent versus 19 percent). Lankford and Wychoff (1992) also found that Catholics often choose private schools for their religious values. In contrast, charter parents are more likely to choose schools based on academic factors (71 percent versus 58 percent). Home school parents chose to home school because they felt that it was important to incorporate their personal belief systems and values into their child's education (McAlevey, 1995). Laciereno-Paquet and Brantley (2008) also found moral values to be the highest ranked factor among parents of students in charters for not-at-risk students. I am interested in the mention of morals and values in the literature because I believe that this may also be a factor in my context and research findings.

Parents who choose different options for their children also mention the school environment and feeling safe. The comfort level of a school for the parents was very important-including a welcoming first impression from the staff, the facility, the school environment, and a sense of inclusiveness for all children (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007, p. 54). In other literature, safety was the most basic issue (parents presented this as not just "in school" safety, but includes the quality of the facility and the neighborhood that surrounds it). Next, the matching of the school's strengths to the child's needs within a reasonable distance was also considered important (Teske, Fitzpatrick & Kaplan, 2007, p. 54). Depending on the city where parents live,



determined some differences in non-academic factors. For example, safety and discipline were important in selecting a school in Washington D.C., where parents in Milwaukee were more likely to cite facilities and resources of the school as part of the reason for their selection. Parents who home school also mentioned the issue of safety and wanting “to protect their children from the world which was seen as a threatening place full of struggles” (McAlevey, 1995, p. 132).

In a National Household Education Survey (2003) “the desire to provide religious or moral instruction” was cited by seventy-two percent of the parents as a reason why they chose to home school (as cited by Lacireno-Paquet & Brantley, 2008, p. 18). Parents who choose to home-school (McAlevey, 1995) commonly stress the importance of teaching values that are important to them. McAlevey’s (1995) analysis found that a significant part of the parents’ reasons to home school related to instilling their values into their child’s education. One parent liked having the control of her child’s education by connecting it to her own spiritual philosophy and felt that the public schools did a poor job humanizing children because they do not teach morals that she feels are important. Another parent believed that it was her responsibility to teach her children the curriculum that supported her Christian values and religious beliefs according to the Bible and believed that it was not the state’s job to educate her children, but her job as the parent. Although home schooling is not one of the choices that I investigate in my research, it is important to mention because of the similar reasons by the parents correlate with parents whom I interviewed.

Lankford and Wychoff (1992) also discuss how Catholics are more likely to attend private schools than other students for religious reasons, often choosing them for religious reasons. The view that value systems play an important part in the education of the whole child is one held by the Ayaprun school and is part of their school creed as it relates to language and culture.

### Academic factors

Lake and Hill (2006) found that the single most important factor in both charter and non-charter parents' choice are academic factors, including quality teachers and high performance.

Similarly, in the public school arena, parents indicate that they choose schools for academic reasons (quality), because of dissatisfaction with their zoned school and for safety and convenience (Hamilton & Guin, 2006; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999, as cited by Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 210). Parents overwhelmingly say they value academics and characteristics of school quality (good teachers, good curriculum, high test score, etc) when choosing schools (Lacireno-Paquet & Brantley, 2008, p. 11). Parents who home-school also cited academic reasons as their last and final reason with the notion that their child would be one or two grade levels higher than their peers (UCLA study/internet). I want to investigate how academic factors determine school choice in Bethel.

### Logistic factors

Location and demographics of the school are important factors in a parents' choice. According to Goldring and Phillips (2008), parents typically choose a school according to where they live. Demographic information about schools is another key factor parents consider in a variety of choice setting (Lacireno-Paquet & Brantley, 2008, p. 14). The distance of the school from the home is another important consideration (Lake & Hill, 2006). Interestingly, charter school parents are more willing than other parents to trade off convenience for other factors when distance and how far the school is from home is an issue (Lake & Hill, 2006, p. 5). Although very few parents' wrote "location" on the questionnaire, this does not seem relevant to this investigation because Ayaprun and ME School are only ten feet from each other.

### Racial factors

Lacireno-Paquet and Brantley (2008) points to race and the socio-economic composition of school student bodies as central factors in a parents' choice (p. 11). Levine-Rasky and Ringrose (2009) also discuss how class and ethnic identity have an impact on educational choices that are made about schooling. Researchers found that the racial composition of schools was a strong predictor of the charter school chosen. "This suggests that race and class play a key role and that parents may view the racial or peer composition of a school as a proxy for quality" (Lacireno-Paquet & Brantley, 2008, p. 20).

According to Bell (2009) parents of color chose schools where students of color were the majority. Suburban White parents chose schools in which almost all the students were White. Black and Hispanic students were also under-represented in private schools when compared to white students (Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 212).

In some other research, parents are concerned about the “right mix” or the number of diverse students in the school and whether that number is in balance with their own background.

An issue of greater importance for these parents was that of critical mass and the need for assurance that there are other children at this school ‘like us’. As long as there was a critical mass of middle class family is maintained, then there was no reason for her to choose another school (Crozier et al., 2008, p. 264).

Levine-Rasky and Ringrose (2009) also discuss how class and ethnic identity have an impact on educational choices that are made about schooling. For the middle-class mothers in Bridget Bryne’s study, the presence of too many raced and classed “others” appeared to threaten the desired stability of the school. It also raised the possibility that children might not acquire the right social and cultural capital and raced and classed subjectivities’ (Byrne 2006, as cited by Levine-Rasky & Ringrose, 2009, p. 262).

This idea of having a good mix of diverse students that is balanced in the school was something that was mentioned by a few of my parents on the questionnaire. It is common knowledge that ME school has a more balanced and mixed population of students than Ayaprun Elitnaurvik if race or ethnicity plays a factor because the majority of the students at Ayaprun are primarily Yup'ik. As a result, this might be too much of a difference in race for many ME parents, who may view this as not safe, but dangerous (McCarty, 2003).

#### *Active choosers/non-choosers*

Goldring and Hausman (1999) claim active choosers are most likely to be dissatisfied with the public schools in their community, have relatively higher income levels and have little concern about the distance required to attend a magnet school. They also claim that some parents are non-choosers; they do not seek information to engage in the decision-making process regarding school choice; they never consider any school other than the school they are zoned for or assigned (cited by Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 211).

Lake and Hill (2006) found that charter parents and non-charter parents look alike as school choosers. The same proportions learned about their school choice opportunities via word of mouth, use of media and school-initiated outreach. However, charter parents were more satisfied than other choosers (p. 4-6). Goldring and Phillips (2008) also found in other literature regarding choice that parents tend to be more satisfied

with the school their child attends if they are able to choose the school when compared to parents who are assigned to a school.

### *Part 2: Defining choice*

School choice is a complex process and cannot be easily explained. Levine-Rasky and Ringrose (2009) concur when they claim:

Processes involved in ‘school choice’ are not straightforward, and those with privilege do not act with absolute agency. Risk of failure and the instability of social positionings means the mothers in our study constantly navigate between imperatives about the economic success of their children and their commitments to discourses about equality and the social good (p. 267).

### *Constraints*

According to Bell (2009), the common wisdom that given the choice, parents automatically selected the best school is false:

It is suggested that if we simply give parents' choice, they will select the best school from the set that exists. But this logic does not account for the social and historical inequities that shape parents' decision making and constrain the schools that parents are willing to consider (p. 207).

Wells and Crain (1997) agree when they found that higher status groups have greater cultural capital and fewer market constraints, which provides them an advantage over

the poor in a choice system (as cited by Goldring & Phillips, 2008, p. 210). Cultural capital can be defined as knowledge, skills, or other advantages a person acquires based on their social class and position in society, including the ability to succeed in the current educational system (Bourdieu, 1986).

*What is choice?*

Tollefson (1991) discusses “choice” through themes of domination and inequality.

Choice is never totally free, but rather is always between predetermined alternatives. Dominance refers to the capacity to expand one’s range of choices. Individuals or groups are dominated if their choices are constrained relative to others with whom they share social relationships (p. 14).

For Tollefson, power is defined as “the ability to achieve one’s goals and to control events through intentional action” (p. 9). Consequently, he sees ideology, the unconscious assumptions that are seen as common sense, as closely connected to power. An example of an ideology held by many parents’ is the pressure to teach and learn the dominant language, so children will be more successful. As a teacher at an English-only school, I hear many comments from Yup’ik speaking parents who are placing their child at ME instead of Ayaprun because they want them to do better on the standardized tests. So even if current research states all the benefits of bilingualism, (Bialystok, 1999; Diaz, 1985; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002) why are

Native American parents still choosing to place and teach their children only in English?

The historical-structural (HS) approach to language planning described by Tollefson (1991) “[s]eeks the origins of constraints on planning, the sources of the costs and benefits of individuals’ choices, and the social, political, and economic factors which constrain or impel changes in language structure and language use” (p. 31). In this approach, the outside factors that constrain the individual are considered. The HS approach emphasizes collective behavior and seeks to explain why the constraints on language planning exist. This approach tends to look at the bigger picture behind the problems and asks “why” decisions are being made, instead of “what” decisions are being made. This perspective is important to my research as it relates to hidden factors behind the decisions that parents are making when choosing one school over the other without an awareness of all the factors influencing their decision.

Government is making the choice of language for people based on what they deem important to the economic situation of the country. In many countries, the government is taking a lead role in adopting their language of choice and implementing critical decisions through political policies that impact indigenous language education (Crawford, 2004). Oppression of the people and their native language is happening. Tollefson (1991) states:



Because education is a major concern of the state, this fundamental shift in the manner of acquisition means that state policies play a decisive role in determining who has access to the institutions of the modern market and therefore to political power. This shift to school-based language learning is a worldwide phenomenon, and so language policy plays an important role in the structure of power and inequality in countries throughout the world (p. 6).

To help understand the parents' ability to choose, I will describe what Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) call "safe and dangerous" difference of American Indian Education. They discuss "how to judge what might be allowably safe, innocuous expressions of Native beliefs and practices and how the government attempts to manage or eradicate beliefs and practices judged too dangerously different or subversive of mainstream values" (p. 285).

Some examples of a "safe" difference include the positive view that people have towards dance festivals, arts and crafts, and clothing that both the white middle class culture share with the Native American culture, but in a different way. Some examples of a "dangerous" difference include elements or ideas that are foreign to the white middle class society. These "dangerous" differences may include the language, subsistence, land claims, tribal courts, and independent nations. The issue of language can be a dangerous difference because it is not familiar to the dominant white middle-class. As long as English is the primary language spoken in the schools, it is

considered “safe”. The minute Native Americans try to promote their heritage language in immersion schools, then they are viewed as “dangerous.”

Another example of the government actions that undermine choice includes the use of Title VII monies that are supposed to fund Indian Education programs being used to improve English reading scores. Beaulieu (2008) shows that federal funds were not put into programs that provided cultural based education (CBE) or promoted use of Native language and culture, but to after school programs, tutoring, and summer schools to help students become more proficient in English (p. 32). I have seen this exact thing happen at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik where students who have tested low on the standardized tests or are behind in reading English, are asked to attend morning and afternoon school reading programs. It is safe to allot money to the Indian Education Programs under Federal law, but not enough to really make an impact on students to learn the history, language, and culture that builds their identity as a Yup'ik person.

Indigenous people can survive, and are surviving, without their heritage languages, but Lomawaima and McCarty (2002) make a point that they have not *chosen* to do so. “Language loss has been a consequence of consistent state-sponsored linguistic campaigns” (p. 298). In other words, Native people and parents are not choosing to lose their language and their culture, it is something that is occurring from the state and national level through the dominant culture and high-stakes tests.

Is their choice really a free choice or one that is pressured by measures of success according to the Westernized view? Is this choice contributing to the language shift that is happening globally? I think this is definitely one of the factors.

### *Part 3: Bilingualism and choice*

#### *Bilingualism*

According to Lambert (1974) there are two forms of bilinguals; additive and subtractive. Bilinguals who can enhance their L2 without losing L1 proficiency have been referred to as additive bilinguals, whereas those whose L2 was acquired at the expense of losing their L1 have been referred to as subtractive bilinguals. To be additive bilinguals, both of the languages learned must be valued in the society in which they reside (cited in Butler & Hakuta, 2009, p.118). This is relevant to my research because Ayaprun Elitnaurvik's philosophy promotes and develops additive bilinguals, whereas ME School philosophy focuses on developing proficiency in the English language.

Lewis (1976) points out that bilingualism has been viewed as both a "problem" to be overcome and a "challenge" that, once mastered, benefits the individual, the community, and even the nation (cited in Genesee, 2009, p. 547). The view that bilingualism is the 'problem' has often led teachers and school administrators to blame a child's bilingualism for their difficulty or failure in school. This view was supported by early psychometric studies claiming negative associations between bilingualism

and intelligence (Hakuta, 1986). Since the 1960's, however, research has demonstrated that bilingualism has cognitive benefits that may even put bilingual children ahead of their monolingual peers (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Portes & Schauffler, 1994). As a result of this type of research, I wanted to investigate to what extent school choice is influenced by the cognitive benefits of bilingualism.

### *Cognitive benefits of bilingualism*

Until the early 1960's, psychometric studies tended to show negative associations between bilingualism and intelligence (Hakuta, 1986). Then a landmark study, by Peal and Lambert (1962), pointed out a number of methodological problems in previous studies, including selection bias and the language used for testing. After addressing these problems, they found a positive relationship between intelligence and bilingualism. Since then, various studies have reported the positive effects of bilingualism on one's cognition and metacognition in both verbal and non-verbal domains (Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Portes & Schauffler, 1994).

Research further indicates that students from all different academic levels can benefit from learning a second language (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 163) Thomas and Collier (1997) found the most powerful predictor of academic success was schooling for four to seven years in the mother tongue. These findings held true for children with a range of language proficiencies: those who entered school with little or no

proficiency in English, those raised bilingually from birth, and ‘children dominant in English who were losing their heritage language (p. 60).

Furthermore, research found that ethnic minority students who participate in immersion programs, even those who speak a non-standard variety of English (e.g., village English in rural Alaska), demonstrated the same levels of L1 development and academic achievement, as comparable students in L1 programs. In addition, these same students developed advanced levels of functional proficiency in the target languages (Genesee, 2009, p. 565). Bialystok (1999) also did a study on the bilingual mind and found that bilingual children were better in their ability to solve problems than the monolinguals. A recent study on bilingual students in LKSD also found that students who were bilingual out performed their monolingual peers in achievement tests (Wyman et al., 2009).

Similar results were reported at the Laboratory School in Hawaii. Many of the school’s students come from poor and working class backgrounds. Yet, they surpass their non-immersion peers on a variety of measures including the English standardized tests. Wilson and Kamana (2001) attribute these successes to a curriculum that is both academically challenging and uses curriculum that is based on Hawaiian identity and culture .

### *Social benefits of bilingualism*

Among Indigenous parents, however, it is the perceived social benefits of bilingualism that are most important. Hinton (2001) found that the Cherokee, Lakota, Blackfeet, and Yup'ik all consider language as a defining marker of Native identity. For all these groups, language provides the foundation with which one understands cultural activities and traditions. Similarly, a Yup'ik elder confirmed this idea when he said:

I identify kass'aqs (white people) with English language. You have that identity. We have the Yup'ik language and identity...and carried out to the next generation, maintain the language and culture...language reflects where you come from (Lipka, 1994, p. 84).

Likewise, Morrow (1990) found that “most [Yup'ik] students consider a knowledge of their language to be essential to success, as they define it” (p. 25).

Tajfel (1974) defines social identity as “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (as cited by Hansen & Liu, 1997, p. 569). “The language, as Fishman (1996) notes, is related to the culture in such a way that is also associated with kinship, intimacy, and connection to the language that was heard on grandfather's knee”. Communal ties are an important part of who we are as an Alaska Native or Indigenous people. “Language and culture programs offer students a means to acquire a strong, Yup'ik identity; respect for the land and animals;

and a connection to their heritage” (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). Parents in my study frequently described the importance of family and belonging to a community that shares the same values and traditions as key reasons for selecting immersion schooling for their children. May (2000) claims for many of these parents, “Language is a symbol of our identity, conveying our preferred distinctiveness and allegiance” (as cited in Baker, 2006, p. 408).

When people are forced to learn a majority language there are negative effects that impact a person’s sense of self and identity. Eva Hoffman described how she felt when she moved from Poland to North America and was given an English name that didn’t have any meaning to her and thus made her feel like she was a stranger to herself. She describes her entire experience of losing her inner voice, and how the new language was inventing another self inside of her. Her story made me think about what the Alaskan Natives must have felt long ago when the missionaries came and gave them their English names (Hoffman, 1989 as cited in Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2000, p. 164).

Helen Yakobson, a Russian-American, also described her experience when she moved to America. She said “My Americanization took place at all levels of my existence; in one sweep I had lost not only my family and my familiar surroundings, but also my ethnic, cultural and class identity” (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2000, p. 164). Bethel residents, teachers and parents also believe that Yup’ik fluency contributes to a strong Yup’ik identity. They believe that “without a strong capacity in the language, the

connection to one's heritage is lost and an individual is ignorant of who they are and where they come from" (Sampson, 2008, p. 16). These stories exemplify how the loss of language impacts the identity of a person.

### *Parents who choose bilingualism*

In a comprehensive study of dual language education programs, Lindholm-Leary surveyed parents to discuss their attitudes and reasons for choosing a dual language program for their children. She found that all the parents wanted their children to become bilingual. The parents believed that bilingualism would increase their child's opportunities for education and future careers and allow them to socialize with other Spanish speakers. The English-speaking Hispanic parents also chose the dual language programs for their children so they could be immersed in a linguistic culture that had been inaccessible to them. Regardless of the demographic background, the parents she studied were uniformly positive about the programs and recommend them to others (Lindholm-Leary, 2001, as cited in Shannon & Milian, 2002, p. 684-685)

In another study conducted with ten Latino families, the rationale given most often concerned the benefits of speaking more than one language. "Parents argued that in the face of an uncertain future, knowledge of Spanish would: 1) serve their children well academically by providing them a head start in fulfilling language requirements; 2) help their children adapt to possible geographic dislocations and relocations; 3) give their children an edge in a competitive job market. Parents also perceived knowledge



of Spanish as an important part of their children's sense of Latino identity" (Schechter, Sharken-Taboada & Bayley, 1996, p. 6).

Another couple described their choice to maintain Spanish by stating: "It's not so much the language. It was the understanding of values through the language." This finding that is, parents' views of language as a social resource in maintaining cultural tradition and ethnic identity, came through at other points in the interview as well (Schechter, Sharken-Taboada & Bayley, 1996, p. 7).

Data gathered from parents of children who attended one of the four language schools (Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, and Spanish) in Iowa showed that parents held positive attitudes toward heritage language learning, and believed that ideal quality schools for their children were bilingual schools or those that provided instruction with extra heritage language teaching (Yan, 2003, p. 99).

The data showed that the main reasons for the parents to send their child to the language school was their desire to maintain their cultural and religious heritage, strengthen family ties and moral values, and promote bilingual skills for future job opportunities (Yan, 2003, p. 106). Moreover, most of the parents from these language groups did not want their child to lose their own cultural and social identity. Instead, they wanted to keep a close relationship with their children through communication in the heritage language. (Yan, 2003, p. 108)

*Schooling and Indigenous languages*

The Indian Nations at Risk Report, which included schools nationwide, found that most schools that serve Native students discourage the use of Native languages in the classroom, thereby contributing to weakening retention and development of language and culture (Lee, 2007, p. 7). For these speakers the loss of their language can mean losing touch with their cultural heritage since for most people, language is the carrier of culture (Cavallaro, 2005). Nettle and Romaine (2000) agree when they claim that “every language is a living museum, a monument to every culture it has been a vehicle to (as cited in McCarty, 2003, p. 148). Thus, “if speakers begin to doubt that their language will endure, their commitment to maintaining (or even restoring) the first language may be eclipsed by their concern for improving second language skills. As a result, ‘negative ethnicity’ may occur, which is an attitude that stems from the negative self-image and low self-esteem of the minority group who has been discriminated against and marginalized, along with the feeling of not belonging to the dominant culture and not having a culture or language of their own (Cavallaro, 2005, p. 572).

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

Bethel is the only community in southwest Alaska where parents have a choice between two schools. There is an ongoing debate that occurs at school board meetings, in newspaper articles, and on the radio about what should be taught in the schools and at home in regards to language and culture. Through this research I am seeking to look at the broader social context of this debate by investigating the reasons behind the choices made by ten individual parents.

#### *Design of study*

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials....that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p 2).

Qualitative research looks at what is going on in the real world of people's lives and the issues that they are encountering and then attempts to interpret and analyze the

patterns that evolve. This type of research occurs in a natural setting in order to provide the most realistic picture of the questions that are being asked. Mackey and Gass (2005) explain, "The topics of greatest interest for qualitative researchers are human behaviors and socio-cultural patterns and norms which underlie the behaviors" (p. 165). Qualitative research involves the interpretation of the data from an emic or "insider" point of view, rather than an etic or "outsiders" point of view (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p.163). Finally, qualitative research is process orientated with the purpose of following a cyclical kind of path that allows questions to evolve from the context (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 163).

While this study is not strictly an ethnographic case study, I borrow certain characteristics of ethnography when interviewing each participant. Spradley (1979) suggests that ethnography is a useful tool for "understanding how other people see their experience" (p. iv). He emphasizes, however, that "rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people" (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). Using ethnographic interviews, I seek to elicit real issues that matter to each parent so that I can paint a fuller picture of what they know and believe when making their school choice. I am not trying to find a solution to the reasons why parents are choosing one school over the other. My desire is for the community to be better informed about the choices that are being made and why.

As the researcher, I am intimately involved in this study. As a Yup'ik parent of three children, I recall the struggle that my husband and I had in choosing a school with our two younger boys. We placed our older son at ME School and our younger son at Ayaprun School. My personal experience provides an emic perspective when reviewing and analyzing the data. However, my research remains open-ended and cyclical in nature. It does not seek to solve a problem or issue regarding parental choice.

### *Setting*

Bethel is a town in Southwestern Alaska. "Mamterillermiut" was the name of Bethel prior to the arrival of early missionaries which means "Smokehouse People". It is located along the Kuskokwim River 100 miles from the coast in the middle of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Bethel is a central hub for 56 villages that are scattered across the delta and along the coast. It is 340 miles west from the city of Anchorage. Transportation is limited to plane, boat or snow machine as no roads connect to the villages or Bethel. According to Wikipedia (Bethel, n.d.), there are 6356 people who live in Bethel (2006). Most of the people are (61%) Alaska Natives known as the Yupik Eskimo who maintain a unique culture and language. There is also a growing population of Caucasians (26%), Asian (.16%), Black (.93%), and Hispanics (1.7%) who have moved to Bethel to provide goods and services to all the people living in the delta. About ten percent of the families live below the poverty line.

The Kuskokwim delta is a vast area of tundra that is spread out over an area the size of Virginia. It is home to one of North America's most valuable wetlands known as the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. This is an important nesting ground for swans, brant and emperor geese as well as 100 million shore and water birds (Alaska Geographic). The Kuskokwim river runs past Bethel and is lined with fish camps and villages that depend on the millions of Pacific salmon that arrive in early June until August. King, coho, red, chum and pink salmon have provided food for the people of the region for many generations. The flat tundra landscape is filled with berries that many local Natives pick in the summer and eat throughout the winter. These berries include blueberry, blackberry, cranberry, and salmonberry. Only ten percent of the delta has any trees, with spruce and birch that can be seen and found along the riverbank. Willows and alder thickets surround the Bethel area. There are hundreds of lakes and ponds, that can be seen by air. They are filled with needlefish, whitefish, blackfish, pike and tomcod. The tributaries of the Kuskokwim create meandering rivers and streams that are filled with rainbow trout, arctic char, sheefish, dolly varden, cod, and herring. Other animals such as the mink, muskrat, otter, beaver, hare, and red fox also live in the delta and are trapped or snared by some people. The lives of the Yupik people depend and revolve around subsistence activities that include moose and caribou hunting, berry picking, fishing, and gathering of wood to help maintain wood stoves for steam baths and homes to keep the cost of fuel down.

Bethel provides many services to people from the delta region. Barge companies transport storage vans full of goods from Seattle to the villages that can be reached along the river. Large goods are also transported from Anchorage to Bethel on large jets and cargo planes. When compared to other rural towns in Alaska, delta residents pay some of the highest living costs in the state. There are three main stores where people can buy food and other goods to supplement their subsistence living. Many goods are bought and transported between villages by small commuter planes. The Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) and Alaska Village Council of Presidents (AVCP) provide medical, health and social services as well as many jobs for people in the area. There are also many city, state and federal jobs available for people who are looking for work. There are five schools, three main stores, three banks, four gas stations, many churches and at least ten restaurants located in Bethel.

### *School district*

The Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) main office is located in Bethel. The district provides services to 27 schools in our region. There are 3800 students enrolled in K-12, who are predominantly Yup'ik. The district has 352 certified teachers, of which one-fourth are Yup'ik. Two of the schools that I will be focusing on in my research include Mikelnguut Elitnaurviit School (ME) and Ayaprun Elitnaurvik (AE).

Mikelnguut Elitnaurviat, which means “The Little Children’s School” is a kindergarten through second grade English-only primary school that has twenty

certified teachers, a principal, librarian, a school social worker, seven classroom aides, six intensive needs aides, a registered nurse, and site technology specialist. The school serves approximately 230 children, including the preschool. One-fifth of the certified teachers are Alaska Native. ME school feeds into another school called Kilbuck, which covers third through the sixth grade. Both schools are English-only schools with Yup'ik classes scheduled bi-weekly for at least thirty minutes. Yup'ik classes are taught by associate teachers with a strong emphasis on arts and crafts. According to the ME parent handbook, the school's mission is to "continually promote excellence in education by maintaining a partnership between parents, schools and community, and integrating the unique cultural aspects of the region and community into the school systems, while requiring the highest academic standards."

The only charter school in the district is Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, which means Ayaprun School. It is named after Ayaprun 'Loddie' Jones, who founded the first immersion kindergarten class. The school is a kindergarten through sixth grade site that has twelve certified teachers, a principal, five classroom aides, and a nurse and site technology specialist that is shared with Kilbuck School. It is a kindergarten through sixth grade immersion school, where only Yup'ik is used for instruction in the first three years of school and gradually decreases until the sixth grade. English reading and language arts are introduced in the third grade and are gradually increased each year through the remaining grades. Two-thirds of the staff are Alaska Native. The school is divided between two different buildings. One building teaches kindergarten



through second grade, and the other site is located in one wing of the Kilbuck Elementary School. The K-2 site is near ME School and shares the use of the gym for one hour during the day. Between the two schools, there was a total of 168 students enrolled in 2008-2009. Six out of the 168 students are Caucasian and the rest have some Alaska Native ancestry. According to the parent handbook, Ayaprun Elitnaurvik believes “learning a second language improves a child’s understanding and appreciation of his/her first language; that preparation for college and careers is enhanced through second language acquisition; success of a student comes from having strong parent involvement; and that knowledge of a second language promotes cross-cultural understanding, mutual respect, and world peace.”

### *Participants*

A total of ten participants were parents of kindergarten students who enrolled at ME or Ayaprun School for the 2008-2009 school year. The researcher interviewed five parents from each school. The participants volunteered to be interviewed after filling out a questionnaire that was given to them during kindergarten round up in April and August 2008.

ME School parent number one (ME1) is of mixed race Yup’ik and White. She is a woman who was born and raised in the town of Bethel. She is a single mother who is between the age of 20 and 25 years old. She and her partner have two children together. She and her sisters attended ME school and lived in Anchorage for a period

of time. Her late grandmother taught her some Yup'ik so she marked that she was bilingual on the questionnaire, but in the interview she said that she did not take the time to really know the language and does not speak it at home.

ME parent number two (ME2) is Yup'ik man whose first language is Yupik. He is married to a Yupik woman and has two children. He was raised in a strong Yupik speaking village and is between the age of 30 and 35 years old. He received most of his education in the village and spent a few years in the Bethel schools. He remembers how difficult it was for him to learn English. Both him and his wife speak primarily English in the home, and speak mainly Yupik when he goes back to the village. They try to teach the language to their two kids at home, but the kids only know English and do not understand them. He originally placed his older son in the immersion school, but took him out of the program after one or two years because he felt that his son was "getting away with too many things in that school."

ME parent number three (ME3) is a single woman who is full Yupik. She is from a strong Yup'ik speaking village where Yup'ik was her first language. She is between the age of 35 and 40. She grew up in the village speaking to both of her parents in Yup'ik. She enjoyed going to school where she learned how to speak English for the first time, along with the help of some of her cousins who moved to the village from Bethel. However, she remembers having to always miss the last part of school to help

her grandmother at spring camp. She tries to speak to her daughter at home in Yupik, but she understands very little. The daughter's father can only speak English.

ME parent number four (ME4) is a Yupik man whose first language is Yupik. He was raised in a strong Yupik speaking village and is between the age of 35 and 40 years old. He attended school in the village and completed the twelfth grade. He is married and has four children, who have all attended ME school. His kids mostly speak English at home, but he speaks Yupik half the time in the home and his children can understand the language.

ME parent number five (ME5) is Yupik woman who is from a village near Bethel. She grew up speaking both Yupik and English to her parents and relatives. She is single but is living with the Caucasian father of their two children. She attended all twelve years of school in the village and is between the age of 35 and 40 years of age. English is the primary language spoken in the home and both children do not understand Yupik. The older sister also attends ME school.

Ayparun parent number one (AE1) is Israeli and is married to a Yup'ik man. She is a woman who speaks Hebrew and English and her spouse is also bilingual. They are raising their two children to learn Hebrew, English, and now Yupik for their son who is entering kindergarten. English is the primary language spoken in the home, except when grandparents are visiting from the village of Scammon Bay or the country of

Israel. Both children are bilingual and can communicate in Hebrew with their mother and grandparents.

Ayaprun parent two (AE2) is a Yup'ik woman who is married to a Yup'ik man. Both she and her husband speak the Yup'ik language. Her husband is from a strong Yup'ik speaking village. She is between the age of 40 and 45 years of age. She attended the Bethel schools and then went off to college and completed her Bachelor in Science degree. They have two boys who attended ME school and one girl who they placed at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik. She placed the two boys at ME because she heard that the immersion school teaches in Yupik, but then the students get tested in English. "Well, they teach Yup'ik but they test in English and I was uncomfortable with that thought." She uses English and some Yupik in the home and finds herself using Yupik the most when she goes to the village or wants to say something in secret to her husband.

Ayaprun parent number three (AE3) is of mixed race Yup'ik and White. He is a man and his first language is English. He is between the age of 35 and 40 years of age. He is married to a Yupik woman from the same village that he grew up in. They both are bilingual and speak primarily Yupik with some English in the home to their four children. He attended school at a Yupik First Language (YFL) school where Yupik was taught the first three years. He graduated from high school in the village and took two years of college. Three out of his four children attended the Ayaprun Elitnaurvik

School, with the exception of their son who was put at ME school because he was a delayed speaker and English was his language of choice.

Ayaprun parent number four (AE4) is a Yup'ik woman from a nearby village. She is single and between the age of 35 and 40 years old. She and her partner have two children together. She grew up and went to school in the village where her parents raised her to speak Yup'ik. She graduated from high school and went on to get her college degree. English is the primary language spoken in the home with some Yup'ik.

Ayaprun parent number five (AE5) is a Caucasian man from the Midwest. He is married to a Caucasian woman and has two children. His is between the age of 40 and 45 years old. English is the primary language spoken in the home.

### *Researcher*

I am both the researcher and a participant in this study, as I made the same choice that the parents included in this study had to make. I am one-half Yup'ik and a teacher of 14 years. I was born and raised in Bethel and attended all of the Bethel schools and graduated in 1985. My mother is full Yup'ik and my father is Hispanic and White. I went onto college in Arizona, but eventually finished my teaching degree through the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 1992. My first job was at Kilbuck Elementary School as a fourth grade teacher. After four years at Kilbuck, I transferred to ME School, where I taught first grade for nine years. Presently I teach music and physical

education to all the students at ME. My husband is Mike Hoffman. He is one-fourth Yupik. We both know very little Yup'ik and speak only English at home. We practice many subsistence activities like berry picking, moose hunting, and cutting fish. We have three children: Jamie (27); Elliott (15); and Taylor (12). Jamie and Elliott both attended ME School and Taylor graduated last year at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik as a sixth grader. My life experiences as a parent and teacher are important in my methodology and will inform my interpretations of the data that I collect as the researcher.

#### *Data collection and procedures*

Data collection procedures included the administering of questionnaires and tape recording interviews of parents willing to participate in the study. Questionnaires were distributed in April and August 2008 when parents came to the school to register their five-year-old child who is going to start school. During the April round up, I sat at a large cafeteria table in the corner of the M.E. school gym, near the table where all parents had to register their child for kindergarten. I invited parents to fill out my questionnaire, as they walked from table to table. As an incentive to fill out the questionnaire, parents were offered a chance to win a pizza. In April 26 out of 75 parents enrolling children in kindergarten filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was provided to get some background information about the parents in regard to their language history, personal and educational background, ethnicity, and reasons why they were placing their child at ME or Ayaprun. I also wanted to find out if they were interested in being interviewed as part of my research.

After reviewing the initial 26 questionnaires, I contacted the parents who indicated they were willing to be interviewed. When I began to contact parents by phone, I ran into some problems. One female participant changed her mind and decided she did not want to be interviewed. Others were hard to get a hold of, or their phone number had changed. I even had one phone number that no longer existed. And then there was one parent who was willing, but our schedule never seemed to coincide with each other because of her travel schedule. Another concern was the timing of the commercial and subsistence fishing season when many parents would be busy working and putting up fish for the coming year.

During the summer, six of my interviews were conducted at the public library in Bethel. Two of the parents asked me to come to their home because it was more convenient for them. Because of the difficulty in finding people to interview from ME school, I decided to recruit parents a second time during the August kindergarten round up held a week before school started. This time, I asked ME teachers who were testing students to ask parents to fill out the questionnaire while their child was being tested. Another 36 questionnaires were filled out in August.

In the first round up in April, I sorted the questionnaires into those who placed their child in Ayaprun and those who chose ME School. From each stack, I first selected parents that were willing to be interviewed. Then I looked to see if they were bilingual

and of Yupik descent because they are the ones who I feel are making the real choice based on their history, language, and culture in this area. I feel that their opinions and reasons are important to understand in my research and what I am trying to investigate. In the second round up in August, I selected three more ME parents' who marked that they were bilingual and willing to be interviewed on the questionnaire. I interviewed one in the fall and the other two in the spring.

Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes to one hour and covered twenty-five prepared questions [See Appendix 4]. These questions pertained to the parents' language history, role of school and home in teaching language and culture, and views towards bilingualism. In order to put the parents at ease, each interview began with some small talk about the weather and community events. Then I would thank them for coming and let them know my appreciation for their time and efforts in helping me with my research. I had a prepared introduction that I read to them [See Appendix 4]. During this introduction, I explained that the goal of my study was to learn about their reasons for their placement of their child at ME School or Ayaprun Elitnaurvik School. Next, I mentioned to them that some of the other issues that will be covered during the interview may include their own language history and how they view language, culture, and bilingualism. I also reemphasized the fact that they did not have to answer a question if it made them feel uncomfortable. Finally, I asked each participant to sign the Interview Review Board Consent Form before I started the tape recorder.



When I interviewed the participants, I found that with each one I felt more at ease. I found the Alaska room at the library to be a nice atmosphere to conduct the interview. It had a large oak table with soft cushion chairs around it surrounded by bookshelves. The library staff was very helpful in posting a sign on the outside door to alleviate any disruptions.

I ran into technical difficulty with only one interview. The tape ran out and stopped recording. The participant talked for several minutes before I realized what had happened. I quickly turned the tape to the other side and asked if he could repeat what had just been said. Fortunately, the male interviewee was very understanding and tried to recall what was said.

There were two parents who preferred that I interview them at their home because they had small children to take care of. Both of these interviews were more difficult to conduct because of the disruption caused by their children. They both lasted longer because I had to keep stopping the recorder when a child interrupted the discussion when they either asked a question or needed help with some task. I felt a sense of relief when both interviews were completed and very grateful for their time and hospitality.

After conducting the interviews, I began to see that the questions that I asked during the interview had an overlap and crossed over into some of the other questions. This was especially true when discussing the reasons of placement in one school over the other. Sometimes I felt like I was asking the same question, but in a different way to make sure that I was getting a more thorough answer. This seemed to be especially true when discussing the role of language and culture in the home and at school. I recall several of the participants feeling like they had already answered the question and so they would seem to repeat themselves or just say the same thing but in a different way. Most of the interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour. The time of the interview seemed to depend upon the number of interruptions when children were around, and if someone was waiting for them outside the room. Finally, I found that the personality of the participant seemed to impact whether they felt comfortable discussing the questions more in depth with me.

#### *Data analysis framework*

The framework of my data analysis is based on the ten interviews that I transcribed and the major themes that emerged from what the parents discussed. Although other themes emerged from the interviews and questionnaires, I chose to focus on these four out of the ten main questions because they seemed most pertinent to my research questions.

- 1) What is success?
- 2) What is the role of the school in the education of a child?

3) What is the role of the home in the education of a child?

4) How is bilingualism viewed by each of the parents?

#### *Limitations*

The limitations to my research is that I interviewed only ten parents and therefore it is just a small sampling of the entire population of parents from both schools. I did not look at the demographics of the participants whom I interviewed or the educational level. Also, when compiling the data, I focused primarily on the interviews from the ten parents whom I interviewed with little emphasis on the information provided from the questionnaires.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis**

In my data collection, I transcribed ten interviews from parents who placed their child at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik or ME school. Each of the ten parents were asked the same set of questions that covered topics involving language history, role of home and schools in the maintenance of language and culture, and bilingualism.

I chose five parents from each school to get enough data from both sides of the question. I also received a total of 26 questionnaires from both ME and Ayaprun parents who volunteered to fill them out during kindergarten round up in April. Consequently, I had to administer the questionnaire again in August because of the lack of ME parents who wanted to be interviewed from the spring questionnaire. As a result, I received 36 more questionnaires from ME parents of incoming kindergarteners. Out of the 36 questionnaires, I was able to interview two more parents to complete my data collection. I will include some of the interesting findings that came out of the questionnaires near the end of my analysis.

The focus of my data analysis is based on the ten interviews that I transcribed and the major themes that emerged from what the parents discussed. Although other themes emerged from the interviews and questionnaires, I chose to focus on these four out of the ten main questions because they seemed most pertinent to my research questions.

- 1) What is success?
- 2) What is the role of the school in the education of a child?
- 3) What is the role of the home in the education of a child?
- 4) How is bilingualism viewed by each of the parents?

*How do parents define success?*

What is success? Every person has their own definition of success based on their own background and personal experiences. McCarty (2003) relates success to school achievement when she explains success is an “[e]quality of opportunity to achieve, through schooling, personal, Indigenous community, and larger societal educative goals” (p. 149). In contrast, Gegeo (1994) relates success among the Kwara’ae from the Solomon Islands to collective community achievement. For the Kwara’ae success is achieving a good life in which individual and collective spiritual, psychological, and physical needs are met and the well-being of the community is promoted (cited in Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 1999). Both of these definitions, equality of achievement in school and achieving a ‘good life’, as well as others are reflected among ME and Ayaprun parents.

*Meaning of success*

I asked each of the parents I interviewed the question, “What does success mean to you and your child?” The primary theme that surfaced the most from the ME parents was meeting the basic educational requirements as set by the school and the state. Two

major themes that emerged from the Ayaprun parents were; learning as a process and having a strong Yup'ik identity.

### *Basic requirements*

We have all heard in the media and in schools the importance of students getting good grades and doing well in school. There is a common assumption that there will be more opportunities available for those who get a solid education. When discussing the issue of success, four out of the five ME parents [ME1, ME2, ME3, ME4] defined success as it relates to school and being able to complete the basic requirements. They mentioned finishing homework, learning the basics, and completing a grade level. The fifth ME parent did not define success during the interview because I failed to ask her the question.

One of the first parents [ME1] I interviewed defined success as, "Probably, just going by the learning requirements, what they should know by the end of the year." ME2 also said, "Success...well, it's probably attendance and you know just to learn something in school, that's a success." I interpret both their comments to say that just by being in school and learning the basics can lead to success. This idea implies how much trust is placed on the school. A child just needs to be in school and learn whatever the school teaches in order for the child to be successful. Although, the ME parents placed the most emphasis on the learning requirements, one Ayaprun parent [AE1], who is not Yup'ik, but married to one, connected success both to happiness and

the desire for her child to go to college “I want him to be happy. I want him to... I want him to be in college”.

All of these parents are influenced by the Westernized view of “success” and feel the pressures of society that have been placed on them to conform to the national ideals. There is this underlying pressure on parents’ for their children to learn standardized English, so they can do well in school and pass state-mandated tests each year. I felt this same pressure to conform when I placed my older son Elliott at ME School. At the time, I believed that learning English was his answer to “success” in school. English would guarantee his success on all the tests mandated by the state and federal government.

### *Enjoying the process of learning*

Two parents from Ayaprun [AE1, AE5] connected success to being happy and enjoying the learning process. AE1 states, “I had a hard time in school, and I don’t want him to have an easy time, but I want him to have a good time in school. I want him to take whatever he can from that experience.” AE5 also says, “For me success would be to have her go and enjoy it and learn to enjoy the learning process. That would be great success.” For both of these parents, success encompasses the idea that learning is an ongoing process, rather than a product that is finished when a reading or grade level is completed. This idea relates to the way the Yup’ik people have traditionally taught their children. Learning is integrated into everyday life, and

knowledge is gained through observation and self-reflection as well as through action (Kawagley, 1995, p. 23).

This relates back to what the Ayaprun participants revealed as important in the education of their children. They believed that the school and the home should be closely connected and stressed the importance of having culturally relevant curriculum that is reinforced at home and in the school. For these parents, learning is more of a holistic process than a finished product.

#### *Developing identity as a Yup'ik person*

Three out of the five Ayaprun [AE1, AE3, AE4] parents connected success to their identity as a Yup'ik person.

My kids also speak Hebrew. If they can get the understanding of the Israeli part, then they have to understand the Yup'ik part to accept themselves as Yup'ik, also. [AE1]

You have to know who you are. You have to know where you come from. You have to know your ancestry, you have to know who your people were and to know how strong they were in their beliefs and to know that they had a lot of pride...a lot of courage. [AE4]



Part of being successful is showing and representing your family or your community in the things that you do, so...no negative things...come back to [you]. [AE3]

AE3's definition of success relates to "Yuuarag" or the "Yup'ik way of life." People believe if a person is positive and treats people and animals respectfully, that person will be rewarded. On the contrary, if a person is negative and treats people and animals disrespectfully, then negative things will happen to this person. Kawagley (1995) describes this when he says, "The original Yupiaq based their philosophy and life ways on maintaining and sustaining a balance among the human, natural, and spiritual worlds" (p. 15). AE School reinforces the Yup'ik beliefs and traditions through their mission statement in their school handbook that says:

[T]o provide a high quality education to meet state standards while strengthening Yup'ik language and culture, promoting understanding of cultural differences, and enhancing each student's cultural identity and their acceptance of others.

The AE parents felt strong about the school being a place that promoted the Yup'ik language and culture and reinforced the identity of their child. They felt that the school's curriculum should be aligned with their own traditions and values instead of one that was Westernized or foreign to them.

### *Discussion of success*

All of the ME parents interviewed view success as it relates to the school and not to family and community values. They also tended to view learning as a product that had to be attained in school. These views may reflect a belief among ME parents that school is for “education” in the Westernized sense (reading, writing, arithmetic), while a basic understanding of culture, language, and values can be taught in the home.

The definition of success and what it means to every parent in terms of what should be emphasized or taught in the school and what should be taught at home is an ongoing debate in the local newspaper and in the community. According to Sampson (2008)

Some residents view Yup'ik fluency as necessary due to factors such as language shift or communicating with elderly family members, while others perceive English as more important language because of the value placed on standardized exams (p. 15).

It's possible that both ME and Ayaprun parents' feel that the school carries the cultural capital that is needed for their children to be successful. Bordieu (1986) defines cultural capital as knowledge, skills, or other advantages a person acquires based on their social class and position in society. For Bordieu, cultural capital is “linked in numerous ways to the person in his biological singularity, and is subject to a hereditary transmission which is always heavily disguised or even invisible...” (p. 4)

Thus, cultural capital involves the social connections that give white middle class people an advantage in mainstream American culture. Cultural capital changes based on the social situation or cultural context. It is possible, therefore, that the ME parents are seeking white cultural capital for their children, which is the very capital that will allow them to get good jobs, higher education, etc., and positions of authority. It is also possible that the Ayaprun parents may be seeking the Yup'ik cultural capital for their children, which could lead to greater success within the Yup'ik community and greater subsistence success or leadership roles within the traditional society, that may help them become a strong respected member (e.g., elder) of the community or village.

All of the Ayaprun parents interviewed view success as it relates to happiness, the identity of their child and strong ties to their family and community. Success had less to do with school for most of the Ayaprun parents, but had more to do with the family and the community. This corresponds with the Yup'ik values that define success as living a positive life within the family and community. It also aligns with the Maori people who believe that it was critical that children acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to enhance the community and to help guarantee their family's or community survival, but also that of future generations (Rameka et al., 2007). Both viewpoints of success from each group of parents are important conditions that influence the choice of schooling for their child.

*What is the role of the school in the education of your child?*

From my own experience as a parent and a teacher in the classroom, parents in general have very specific ideas about the role of the school and what their expectations are when they send their child to school. Some themes that emerged from this discussion were: teaching of academics; preparing for future jobs; identity and language; and Yup'ik cultural values.

*Academics*

All five of ME parents interviewed believe that the primary role of the school is to teach academics. Four out of the five, [ME2, ME3, ME4, ME5] talked specifically about teaching “the basics” of reading, writing, and math. ME5 exclaimed that the school is responsible for "Just the basics, like...ABC's and 123's and reading, writing, and math." ME2 claimed that the school is responsible for meeting the state standards when he responded with, "Up to the standards, the standards set by the state."

Only one Ayaprun parent [AE3] explicitly stated the role of the school is to teach academics when he said: "Giving them the basic knowledge that they need to get at that age. Giving them a backbone basically for what they need to learn." All of these parents felt a primary responsibility of the schools is to teach their children the basic requirements set by the state. It is important to mention that although most Ayaprun parents did not explicitly mention academics as an important role of the school, does not imply that the Ayaprun parents care any less about a quality education. Ayaprun

Elitnaurvik and other heritage immersion schools strongly believe that they don't have to sacrifice the language and culture to have a strong academic program. You can have both according to the research on bilingualism and bilingual education (see page 20 in literature review).

### *Preparation for future*

Two ME [ME2, ME4] and one AE parent [AE1] interviewed felt the school should prepare their child for the job market. ME2 believes that schools should provide more vocational training when he says "you know [you] go to vocational training for something,... not all the subjects in school require [vocational training]. They don't teach the necessities for life." ME4 goes even further when he claims, "[w]hen they're done with school, they go... to other cities or somewhere [else] to find more work." AE1 also mentions the importance of an education in preparing her son for the future when she says, "No matter what you have to get education. You have to do all you can to get in, and I want him to have a good job after." All of these parents seem to view the future as something that is concrete and sustainable.

One more AE parent [AE2] had a more generalized view of what is important in their child's future. AE2 says the school is "responsible for...teaching children all the different aspects of life in influencing them and teaching them the different ways they can go." On the questionnaires, two more parents (one from each school) included this concept of being prepared for the future.

### *Identity and language*

Four out of the five Ayaprun parents [AE1, AE2, AE3, AE4] expressed that the school's role is more than just the teaching of academics, but also includes teaching the whole child. AE4, a teacher at Ayaprun, explains:

What our school tries to do is we try to create a whole person, not just reading, writing, and math, but you know going into sometimes the spiritual aspect of it and trying to connect with the child. [AE4]

Three other parents from Ayaprun made similar remarks. AE1 stated, "I believe that if you teach the language, they can be related to their culture. Not just by songs, but by really understanding of who they are." AE2 explains how the identity of her daughter was important to preserve because she was named after her late grandmother. "We believe that his late mom's spirit is in her...she was very traditional. We didn't want her to go too far from the traditions and stay close to the traditions of her culture." I interpret this parent to say that because her daughter was named after her traditional grandma, that it was important that she chose Ayaprun Elitnaurvik to help teach her the Yup'ik language and define who she is as a Yup'ik child. So in this case, AE2 is expecting the school to play a large role in the formation of her child, out of respect for her late grandma. In another example, AE3 believes that the teaching of values occurs during the process of learning the language. It is one of the reasons he placed his daughter at Ayaprun. On the questionnaire, AE3 wrote, "The Yup'ik values that we

hold are important and with the values, respect is an important part that is taught through the Yup'ik language.”

All of these AE parents believe that the role of the school is more than just teaching the basic requirements, but provides support in developing who their child is as a Yup'ik person. As a parent who placed my second child at Ayaprun, I also recognized that the Ayaprun School provided more than reading, writing, and math. Through the language and through instruction using culturally relevant themes, my son was learning the foundations that help define who he is as a Yup'ik person. Navajo artist and educator agrees when he says, “My language, to me, ... that’s what makes me unique, that’s what makes me Navajo, that’s what makes me who I am,” (McCarty, Romero & Zepeda, 2006, p. 28) A Yup'ik elder also discusses how language is tied to a person’s identity when he says:

I identify kass'aqs (white people) with [the] English language. You have that identity. We have the Yup'ik language and identity...and carried out to the next generation... language reflects where you come from (Lipka, 1994, p. 84)

In contrast to the AE parents, none of the ME parents mentioned identity as a factor in their choice. A possible reason for this could be what Lomawaima and McCarty (2003) refer to as “safe and dangerous difference”. For Lomawaima and McCarty, the white middle class decide and control what is normal and tolerable (safe) and define what is considered abnormal and intolerable (dangerous). ME is considered the normal

school with the standard curriculum, teaching the standard language, English.

Ayaprun, on the other hand, is considered the different school, with a different culturally based curriculum, teaching the different language of Yup'ik. Anything that deviates from what society perceives as the norm, suddenly is viewed as "dangerous". ME School is the dominant school with all the "safe" differences (culture week, Yup'ik class twice a week) and Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is the charter school with all the "dangerous" differences (culturally-based curriculum, Yup'ik immersion).

All five of the Ayaprun parents interviewed believe that part of the school's role is to teach the language. Five more Ayaprun parents wrote on the questionnaire, that language was an important factor in their choice of school. One of the written comments said: "For my child to learn Yup'ik (read, write, speak)". Another parent wrote, "To keep our language strong." The significant role language plays in choosing Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is really not all that surprising since Ayaprun is a language immersion school.

### *Yup'ik culture and values*

Parents who chose Ayaprun believe that the Yup'ik culture and values should be taught in the school. Three parents from Ayaprun [AE1, AE3, AE4] believe that the school is responsible for teaching cultural values and beliefs. As AE4 explains, "...the school should be responsible for adding onto the family beliefs that we have already."



Three more Ayaprun parents also mentioned the importance of culture on their questionnaires. This emphasis on the importance of cultural traditions and way of life coincides with their definition of success. In order for their child to be happy and successful in the Yup'ik community, they need to know their culture and the values that are shared in the family and community.

Although four ME parents [ME2, ME3, ME4, ME5] interviewed also felt that language and culture should be taught at school, none of them cited this as an actual reason for choosing ME School on the questionnaire. Language and culture only became important when prompted by the interview question, "What role, if any, should school play in the education of language and culture?"

[It] should be included in all the areas where culture plays a role in...like in Kodiak, I'm sure they have their culture, and here we got our culture. We should be able to use a lot more curriculum for that area. [ME2]

I try speaking to her in Yup'ik at home. I'm starting to talk more [of] the English language, since everybody is talking. But I try my best to speak to her in Yup'ik and it's the school [that should] teach her in Yup'ik, too. [ME3]

I told one of my teachers at a parent conference if they maybe do it almost every day, that language and culture stuff. I think that would be a good role in the school. [ME4]

I wanted my kids to learn Yup'ik because it was important in my family to learn Yup'ik and to know how to speak and understand. But after I came here to visit, I was happy to know that they had a Yup'ik class...so they both can learn English and Yup'ik. [ME5]

*What role should the home play in the education about language and culture?*

Bethel residents have very firm ideas about the role of the home in teaching the language and culture. In Sampson's study (2008), 22 participants believe that parents and the family should be instrumental in educating children in language and culture, if the elders are unable to teach. Four of these participants feel that teaching Yup'ik language and culture should be the exclusive responsibility of the parents, not the school (p. 48).

The themes that surfaced from the interviews and questionnaires involved: language use in the home; regrets that parents have about not passing the Yup'ik language on to their children; importance of home/school connection; cultural and subsistence activities; and how culture is influenced by modern technology.

*Language use at home*

Two out of the ten parents [ME4, AE3] interviewed stated, and two ME parents wrote on the questionnaire, that the Yup'ik language should be taught in the home. ME4 wrote on his questionnaire, "I think English is getting important in our age of school

and work for the future because they can learn Yup'ik at the home.” AE3 said “...if we want the school to do those things [educating about language and culture] then we should be doing those things too, at home.” There seems some uncertainty about where the language should be taught. Some ME parents say it should be taught at home, but the same parents also believe that more should be taught at school, while others seem to be happy with the existing program. On the other side, the AE parent wants the language to be taught at home along side the school and view the school as a partnership arrangement in the teaching of the language.

This is a debated topic at many of the Advisory School Board (ASB) meetings, in newspaper articles, and on radio talk shows in Bethel and the surrounding villages. Some prominent members in the Yup'ik community publicly state that Yup'ik should be taught at home because that is how it was done traditionally. At least one board member in Bethel wants language and culture taught strictly at home, and not at school. Other school board members are less absolute and want both languages taught, but I am not certain to what degree. Parents have heard this issue being discussed on many different levels and it is considered a highly controversial topic with many mixed feelings. Interestingly, Sampson (2008) reports that the Apache perceive home as the primary place to learn their Native language, while the Lakota and Blackfeet believe that all the aspects of language and culture can and should be taught in school (p. 63). Fishman (1991), on the other hand argues that language practice in the home is

the most critical factor in predicting whether a language will be maintained across the generations.

*Regrets for not passing down the language*

While discussing the role of the home in the education about language and culture, the theme of regrets about not passing down the language emerged without any prompting. Two out of the five ME parents' [ME2, ME5] regret not passing the language onto their children at home.

I feel bad because I am not using those skills...I hardly speak Yup'ik to my kids. [ME5]

I should have went the other round and [taught] them Yup'ik first and as they as they grow up they can learn English in school.[ME2]

The pressures that parents feel to conform to the dominant Western society and speak English to their kids is apparent in AE2's interview. Although she placed her kindergarten daughter at Ayaprun, she also shared a story about the inner struggle she had when she placed her oldest son at ME school many years prior.

My oldest son did speak Yup'ik...but he did know Yup'ik more than English when he was in preschool. But...I saw him frustrated...trying to function in a dominant English environment...where he was trying to communicate with other children...and teachers, and friends...I was at a loss...And what he

would do, he would be yelling in Yup'ik, when they couldn't understand him, so he would try to say the same thing louder. As if yelling would make them understand better (laughs). And I was like trying to evaluate...What am I doing to this poor child...I'm teaching him Yup'ik in this white man's environment. What am I doing? [AE2]

Then AE2 continues her story and explains how her son seemed like an outsider during story time when she observed him at ME School because he could not understand the English language.

I think he was trying to transcribe his languages...he was trying to learn and he knew he wasn't learning like the other students were learning...I mean he was at a different level and he had to catch up. So...I don't know..I could see that in retrospect, but...what can we do?...*We made that choice* [to place him at ME] *then*. [AE2]

It is important to note the difficulty and the complexity of what is involved in the choice that parents must make in regards to what should be taught at home and in the school when dealing with language and culture. One could sense her [AE2] pain and emotion, along with the struggle she felt when trying to do what she felt was best for her child when she began to question herself by saying, "What am I doing to this poor child... I'm teaching him Yup'ik in this white man's environment. What am I doing?" The position that she was placed in when trying to navigate in both worlds was

apparent during the interview. Even though she felt that it was important for her children to learn their heritage language, she was also compelled to give in to societal pressures so her child could “fit in” at ME School. Kawagley (1995) agrees with this idea when he claims:

The messages from the school, the media, and other representations of Western society present students with an unreal picture of the outside world, as well as a distorted view of their own, which leads to a great deal of confusion for students over who they are and where they fit in the world (Kawagley, 1995, p. 54).

Similar to AE2’s story, I have similar regrets for *not* placing my older son at Ayaprun. I experienced the same pressure to place my son at ME, because like her, I believed that English was the language that he would need to learn so he could be more successful in school. However, two years later, after much discussion and research, I decided to place my youngest child at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik so that he could learn the Yup’ik language and culture that seem more relevant to building his identity as a Yup’ik person.

#### *Home/School connection*

Three out of the five Ayaprun parents [AE1, AE3, AE4,] believe that the home should reinforce what is happening in school and visa versa.

If we want the school to do those things [language, culture, traditional practices], then we should be doing those things too at home. [AE3]

An important role of the home in the teaching of language and culture involves the traditions and subsistence activities practiced by most of the parents I interviewed. Most people who live in rural Alaska rely on subsistence foods and activities to help sustain their family for the winter. These activities are an integral part of the Yup'ik people and culture. I feel that it is necessary to share some of their responses to this question, because I believe that these cultural activities help define us as Yup'ik people.

Nine out of the ten parents describe the cultural activities that are practiced at home. The only parent who didn't practice these activities was a Caucasian male, AE5. Similar to all of the Ayaprun parents, AE5 sees the school/home connection as important, but has very little personal knowledge of the language and culture. To overcome this, he hopes to get some support from his Yup'ik friends. The remaining nine parents referred explicitly to subsistence activities, including: cutting fish, hunting, and berry picking.

I hardly do any Native crafts but like cutting up fish...we go fish camping and try show her how to make aqutak and all that. [ME3]

[He] takes them hunting, we go fishing, we go berry picking and all that stuff and in those activities we talk about what's proper and what's not. [AE4]

Finally, ME1 connected cultural and subsistence activities to daily survival. "That's how you survive around here, me and my family. You just hold it in our hands."

It is important to understand the rich culture that is shared among the Yup'ik people and how the culture plays a significant role in defining the people. Prior to the influence of schools, the Yup'ik parents and family members taught their children how to hunt, skin animals, sew, build sleds and boats, gather food, and pass on traditional knowledge in the kasqik. Almost everything that was learned occurred during traditional and subsistence activities. Formal schooling today is completely different than what it used to be for the Yup'ik people.

### *Bilingualism*

In the interviews, I explicitly asked the parents three questions about bilingualism. I asked these questions because I wanted to know if the parents' views towards bilingualism were positive or negative. I also wanted to find out if parents were aware of the literature on bilingualism.

- 1) What does it mean to be bilingual?
- 2) Is bilingualism important, useful, or beneficial?



### 3) Does bilingualism hold a person back from learning English or succeeding in school?

I chose these questions because I wanted to see how the parents defined bilingualism in their own terms and also as a lead question to get them thinking about their own language use. I also wanted to find out if any of the parents felt that learning a second language would hinder their child in any way. There are many misconceptions about bilingualism that may lead parents' to make a choice based on assumptions, rather than fact. I felt the pressures, like many of the parents, for my children to learn the dominant language over their own heritage language. For my oldest son, I gave in to this pressure of standardization to learn the dominant language and placed him at ME school. Two years later, I was influenced by the research on the cognitive benefits and the social factors that are associated with bilingualism and placed my youngest son at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik. Therefore, the cognitive and social factors that are associated with bilingualism impacted the choice that I made for each of my children.

Four sub themes that emerged from their responses were: cognitive effects; fear of their children being held back; community; English; and linguistic capital.

#### *Defining bilingualism*

Most of the ten parents that I interviewed had very simple definitions when asked the question, "What does it mean to be bilingual?" ME5 defined it as, "Can speak fluently

in various languages.” ME4 replied, “...to know our language and English.” AE1 states, “It means to be able to practice two different languages...” AE4, a teacher at Ayaprun, defined it as “... it means knowing two dots and being able to recognize and being able to slip in between the two different dots that are like going on in the room. It means knowing the distinction and [being] sensitive to both parties.”

Bilingualism is much more than just speaking or communicating in two languages, like many of the parents have stated. Baker (2006) believes that it is impossible to define bilingualism because of its elusiveness. He believes that the fundamental difference to define whether a person is bilingual or not depends on bilingual ability and bilingual usage. Depending on the context, “an individual’s two languages are never static but always changing and evolving” (p. 17).

### *Cognitive benefits*

Five out of the ten parents [ME1, AE1, AE3, AE4, AE5] interviewed stated that there are cognitive benefits associated with learning a second language (Portes & Schaufli, 1994; Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Four of the parents were from Ayaprun Elitnaurvik. AE5 said, "Learning that second language early, there is a big advantage to that later on. I guess in the language center in the brain...if you don't use them not then you lose them and it makes it harder to learn a language much later." ME1 was the only parent from ME to mention the benefits of bilingualism when she states, "But being bilingual...you have greater chances of your learning abilities."

*Fear of their children being held back*

Three out of the ten parents [ME2, ME4, AE2] thought that bilingualism *may* delay a child from learning English. Two more ME parents who were not interviewed mentioned this idea on the questionnaire. One of these parents wrote, "I've heard that children who attended Ayaprun were behind later on." ME2 confirmed this when he said, "Probably to a point it [Yup'ik language] holds a child back. You know, 'cause they're trying to learn both languages. They're trying to learn Yup'ik and on top of that, they're trying to learn English." One Ayaprun parent [AE2] made the claim that it may delay a child from learning English, but it does not hold them back from being successful. She says, "I think it delays it, but not...holding them back." AE2 also mentions that she has seen many Yup'ik bilinguals become successful in the white mans environment, so she understands that it does not prevent anyone from succeeding.

Seven out of the ten parents [AE1, AE3, AE4, AE5, ME1, ME3, ME5] interviewed believe that bilingualism does not hold a child back from learning English. Three of the seven were from ME and the other four were from Ayaprun.

Two parents out of the ten [ME1, AE3] believe that a child has to be focused and/or highly gifted in order to become bilingual or learn a second language. There was one parent from each school that mentioned this idea during the interview. AE2 clarifies this when she wrote on the questionnaire, "My daughter seems smart enough to handle

it." The other parent, ME1, isn't quite sure when she says, "I don't know the whole bilingual. I just want my son to be more focused right now." This is a common assumption that many parents have in order to place their child in an immersion school. It does not help that many language charter schools across the United States require students to have a high score on an intelligence test as one of the main criteria for acceptance into an immersion program. My husband and I also held this assumption when we placed our older son at ME School.

### *First language*

When reviewing the questionnaires, twelve ME parents wrote that they chose the English-only school because English was their child's first language used in the home. One ME parent wrote, "Because my child's first language is English, I want him to understand what is being said to him, so he's not confused." It seems that the parent believes that learning a second language may confuse her child or it could be a lack of interest in learning the Yup'ik language. Another possibility could relate to the idea that only "smart" kids can learn a second language and she feels like her child is not smart enough to learn a new language. Could it be that most or all of the twelve parents feel this way... that their child may become confused? I also felt that my older son would be confused by learning a second language and I worried that he would not be focused enough to learn the Yup'ik language.

Another ME parent wrote “We speak English in our household. My child knows very little Yup’ik.” This seems to indicate that many of the ME parents’ are making the choice of school for their child based on the language that they primarily use at home. I also sense that there may be some anxiety felt by the parent about the child learning a second language because the parent is not fluent in the language. I also felt this same anxiety when I placed my older son at ME school.

Two other ME parents wrote on the questionnaires that their child's first language was Yup’ik, and therefore chose ME to teach their child English as their second language. One parent wrote, “Mainly she speaks Yup’ik” and the other parent wrote, “English as [a] second language. I want him to focus on learning more English in reading and writing.”

### *Only in the village*

Seven parents [ME1, ME2, ME4, ME5, AE1, AE2, AE3] view bilingualism as something that is useful in the village or when talking to the elders. ME1 claims, “I know it's useful though... going to Kipnuk in the summer, you know, that is how they communicate.” A parent from Ayaprun [AE3] explains how beneficial being bilingual is to him and his job. He states, “...and at work we talk in Yup’ik to one another and on the phone most conversations are in Yup’ik to the villages.” Both [ME5] and [AE1] expressed the benefit of their child to be bilingual so that they will be able communicate with their grandparents in Yup’ik. This idea of bilingualism being

useful in the community with elders is also shared by the Inuit, who associate the language with the participation of traditional activities and communication with the elders (Tulloch, 2004).

### *English*

While ME2, ME3, and ME4 parents state that bilingualism is important, all three parents view English as more important than Yup'ik. As ME4 states, "The Yup'ik is important, too, so we don't want to lose the language, but uh...seems like a lot of people are mostly got to go out to some cities to work and they probably have to know more English then. I guess." The importance of English is also signaled in ME2's description of the interactions between his children and their grandparents: "Yeah. They [grandparents] understand English and they're starting to speak English more often because all their grandkids. They [grandchildren] mostly speak English like my kids." I found it interesting that all three parents seem to value English more than Yup'ik. This is important to recognize the language shift that is happening within the dynamics of the family where even the grandparents are choosing to speak English so they can communicate with their grandkids.

### *Other findings*

There were some themes that emerged from the ten interviews and the questionnaires that did not fit into any of the other categories. However, I felt that they are important to mention because of the number of times they were mentioned as a reason for

choosing a certain school. The three themes that emerged were: family member attended the school; reputation of teachers and school; and feelings that the school was more challenging than the other. Most of these reasons were written on the questionnaires and not given by the parents' I interviewed.

#### *Family members attended*

One significant finding that emerged from the questionnaires included the history of schooling in regards to self, sibling, or other family members who attended Ayaprun Elitnaurvik or ME School. Twenty-two ME parents and one Ayaprun parent had mentioned this to be one of their reasons for placement of their child. Some of the written comments from the ME parents included: "All of my younger relatives and myself have all attended this school, so its what I chose for my child." A second comment said, "Other siblings attended ME" and another parent wrote, "Because she wants to be like her brothers."

#### *Reputation of school*

The second sub-theme involved the convenience and comfort level of the school itself. Fifteen ME parents and 4 AE parents mentioned this on their questionnaire as one of their primary reasons for choosing Ayaprun School or ME. One ME parent wrote, "Nice people and staff" and one of the Ayaprun parent's wrote, "close knit". This whole idea of convenience was huge and one factor that I did not expect to be so

prevalent in the questionnaires. The reputation of the school and knowing the teachers plays an important role in choice of school.

*More challenging*

A third sub theme that surfaced had to do with the idea that one school is better than the other because it is perceived to be more challenging. Thirteen ME parents and two AE parents wrote this down as one of the primary reasons for placement on their questionnaire. This suggests to me that many parents' feel that the English school is viewed to be the more difficult school out of the two choices. Apparently, the parents feel that learning the Yup'ik language is not as challenging as learning English. Finally, one parent from each school mentioned that agreement was necessary by both parents in order to have their child be placed at the school of choice. All of these factors demonstrate the complexity of choice as it pertains to the placement of children into an English or Yup'ik school.



## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

I have tried in this thesis to understand why parents in the town of Bethel choose either to send their children to an English medium public school (ME) or a Yup'ik immersion charter school (Ayaprun). To investigate this question, I collected anonymous questionnaires, and conducted extended interviews with parents enrolling their children in Kindergarten in Bethel for the 2007-2008. I focused my investigation on the following four research questions:

- 1) What is success?
- 2) What is the role of the school in the education of a child?
- 3) What is the role of the home in the education of a child?
- 4) How is bilingualism viewed by each of the parents?

In the remainder of this chapter, I will provide a summary of my findings. Following each finding, I will provide a brief discussion of how school choice in Bethel compares to other studies of school choice. I will include some other studies regarding Native language programming in my discussion of bilingualism. I will also discuss how the role of the home and school in teaching language and culture impact language planning efforts. Finally, I will give possible solutions to the ways in which communities can be agents of change from the bottom-up, if that is what is desired in promoting language and culture in the schools.

### *Summary of findings*

#### What is success?

The meaning of success was defined differently by the ME and Ayaprun parents. The primary theme that surfaced from the ME parents was meeting the basic educational requirements as set by the school and the state. Two major themes that emerged from the Ayaprun parents were learning as a process and having a strong Yup'ik identity. All of the ME parents viewed success as it related to the school and not to family and community values. They also tended to view learning as a product that had to be attained in school. All of the Ayaprun parents view success as it relates to happiness, identity, and strong ties to the family and community.

Other studies also find this division in definitions of success. In my literature review, public school and charter school parents, similar to ME parents often define success in terms of academics and completing the basic requirements in school. Private school and home-school parents, similar to Ayaprun parents often define success in terms of happiness, identity, and strong ties to the family and community (Lake & Hill, 2006; McAlevey, 1995).

#### What is the role of the school in the education of a child?

All of the ME parents believe that the primary role of school is to teach academics. Some ME and AE parents felt the school should prepare their child for the job market. Other ME and AE parents' seem to have a more generalized view of what is important

in their child's future with an emphasis on being prepared. For Ayaprun parents, the school's role goes beyond the teaching of academics, and involves teaching the whole child. They believe the school's role should provide support in developing their child's identity as a Yup'ik person with the culture and values that are tied closely with the language. This emphasis on the importance of cultural traditions and way of life coincides with the Yup'ik's worldview of success. Most of the ME parents also felt that language and culture should be taught at school, but it was not one of the reasons why they chose the school.

Charter and public school parents often see the role of the school as simply teaching academics and preparing kids for the job market (Lake & Hill, 2006). ME parents also believe that a primary responsibility of the school is to teach their children the basic requirements set by the state. Parents who home school often see the role of the school as a place to instill their values into their child's education (Tate, 2007). Ayaprun charter parents also see the role of the school as a place to teach the "whole Yup'ik child" the values that are connected with the language and culture.

#### What is the role of the home in the education of a child?

The themes that surfaced from the interviews and questionnaires involved language use in the home, personal regrets about not passing on the language, importance of home and school connectivity; cultural and subsistence activities, and how culture is influenced by modern technology. There was little consensus among the parents as a

whole on any of the themes, with little or no difference in opinion between the ME and Ayaprun parents. However, all of these ‘differences’ relate in some way to the role of the home in teaching about the culture. All of the parents are in agreement that the culture should be taught at home, with the exception of the Caucasian male from Ayaprun. These same parents relate subsistence activities at home as an important part of their child’s cultural education. Everyone agrees that the culture should be taught at home. Everyone also agrees that it includes subsistence and other traditional activities. Some parents explicitly include language with culture, while others don’t mention it.

Morrow (1990) found that the majority of her participants (Yup’ik adults, students, and certified staff) felt that it was important to teach language and culture both at home and in the schools. In Sampson’s (2008) research, the majority of her participants believe that the home is the best place to learn traditional knowledge, while a few others view the home as the exclusive place to transmit language and culture (p. 53). However, Sampson (2008) found that some of the parents choose to speak English, because it is the language that is easier for them to speak, so they can have more meaningful conversations with their children.

Many Native Americans believe that language use in the home is an important ingredient for language maintenance and revitalization, but it still competes with other societal influences. Parsons-Yazzie found that the children acquired little Navaho even when raised by Navaho speaking parents because of the lower utility and prestige of

the language (as cited by Lee, 2007, p. 5). Wyman (2004) also discusses how some youth in a small Yup'ik village feel that the school undermines the parents' efforts to maintain the Yup'ik language in the home". In other countries with indigenous people such as Norway, teachers struggle to overcome prejudices in the school environment and parents still tend to move their children to Norwegian-medium instruction after a few years in a Sami-medium class, fearing that their children will otherwise end up with fewer opportunities in higher education or on the labor market (Huss, 2008). As a result, the use of English and the need to accommodate others in the community may hinder the parents' efforts to promote Yup'ik in the home (Sampson, 2008). All of these are examples of the societal factors that influence the maintenance of Native language in the home and illustrate the struggle that parents have in trying to keep their language alive.

#### How is bilingualism viewed by each of the parents?

Five sub themes that emerged from the parents comments about bilingualism were: cognitive benefits; fear of holding back; community; and English.

In short, they all deal with the question of whether or not bilingualism is good or bad for the child and when viewed all together, they reveal that the community as a whole is still feeling a bit conflicted over the question. While the majority of all parents interviewed (7 out of 10) said they didn't believe bilingualism holds kids back, there is evidence that parents are generally uncertain about whether bilingualism is equally possible for every child. Some ME parents (2 interviews and 2 questionnaires)

specifically said that learning Yup'ik would hold their kids back. In addition, there was concern that it might delay English (even if it didn't 'hold them back') or that kids had to be extra smart to succeed in the immersion school. All of this suggests a certain degree of uncertainty about whether bilingualism is possible for everyone.

Seven out of the ten parents view bilingualism as something that is useful in the village. Two parents from Ayaprun and three parents from ME described the usefulness of bilingualism in relationship to being able to speak the Yup'ik language when visiting the villages. The other two [one from ME and one from AE] expressed the benefit of their child to be bilingual so that they can communicate with their grandparents. While three of the ME parents state that bilingualism is important, all three of them view English as *more important* than Yup'ik. Therefore, parents are basically saying that Yup'ik is useful in the village, or when talking to elders, but it isn't useful in Bethel or when talking to younger people. In other words, Yup'ik is limited in its usefulness in a way that English is not. This aligns with the idea of linguistic capital where the English language has more linguistic capital in Bethel than the Yup'ik language. However, in the village, Yup'ik may have more linguistic capital than English.

### *My experience*

Many parents view success as passing the tests and are afraid that their child will not be able to pass the tests if their child is learning Yup'ik at school. Therefore, many are

choosing to speak more English at home and language programs are being reduced at many schools in LKSD (Wyman et al., 2009). Parents and community members are also feeling the pressure and are fearful that their child may not pass the tests mandated by the state and federal government.

As a parent, I gave into the pressures of standardization and believed in the Western worldview to learn the dominant language (English) and chose to place my older son Elliott at ME School. That is how I defined success for my child, which was similar to the ME parents view of success. I was influenced by the English tests that were going to be given to him in the third grade and was not completely convinced by all the research that indicated the positive effects of learning a second language. I was also fearful of all the homework that would be required in Yup'ik, a language that neither my husband nor I could help with. I was also not so strong in my own Yup'ik traditions and felt more connected to the Western way of living because that was the way I was brought up. All of these factors resulted in the decision that we made as parents to place him at ME School.

When it was time to place our youngest son, Taylor, in school, my husband and I were influenced more by the social and cognitive factors that are associated with bilingualism. We wanted Taylor to learn our heritage language to help build his identity as a Yup'ik child and help him stay more connected to the culture and traditions that the immersion school provided. We liked the idea that the school

reinforced the Yup'ik values through the school creed and aligned the curriculum to be more culturally relevant. Although, we didn't speak the language, we were convinced that learning a second language would be more beneficial to his academic development and give him an advantage over his peers that were not bilingual. Therefore, we chose to place him at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik.

### *Informed choices*

I believe that informed choices are better choices. I believe that we need to determine our own fate as Yup'ik people and not allow the federal and state government to determine what is best for us with its one-size fits all approach towards education. We need to begin to question the underlying forces that are driving the decision making process so that we can make an informed choice that will benefit our children and fit our needs as Yup'ik parents and community members.

I also believe that parents and community members should read literature about the indigenous people (Maori, Hawaiians, Navajo) who are aware of the language shift that is happening in their communities and are making a conscious decision to make their language and culture a priority in their homes and schools. We need to compare ourselves to them as Yup'ik people and do what we feel is necessary to prevent language shift from happening, so our language will not die. We also need to determine our own fate as Yup'ik parents and decide what is best for our children so



that they can be successful in the Western and Yup'ik world, without having to compromise our language and culture. We can do both!

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## **Appendix 1: Participant Profiles**

**AE1:** Ayparun parent number one is Israeli and is married to a Yupik man. She speaks Hebrew and English and her spouse is also bilingual. They are raising their two children to learn Israeli, English, and now Yupik for their son. English is the primary language spoken in the home, except when grandparents are visiting from the village or the country of Israel. Both children are bilingual and can communicate in Hebrew with their mother and grandparents. She chose Ayparun Elitnaurvik because of the following reasons:

- 1) "Define culture for her kids"
- 2) "Learning a second language."

She feels that Ayparun was the better choice for her son because she believes that culture is language first and can help better define and understand who he is as Yupik person. "I believe that if you teach the language, they can be related to their culture. Not just by songs, but by really understanding of who they are." She also believes that it is the parent's responsibility to teach the language, if they have it. She is familiar with the cognitive benefits that research says about learning a second language. "The research shows that when people have two languages or more, actually use their brain in a larger aspect, like they're using their brain in a better way." Then she goes on to

describe their ability to look at things in different ways and become better problem solvers.

When asked about the responsibility of the schools, she believes that the parents are the first teachers and that it is her responsibility to make sure that her kids are at school and to help them be successful in school. "I think we as parents have the responsibility first, we choose for our kids." She views school as a tool that should enhance the values [respect, share] that are taught at home. Success to her means for her son to be happy and to go to college. "I want him to be happy. I want him to be in college." She also wants him to be responsible and hard working so he will have a good job later on.

When asked about the role of the school in teaching language and culture, she believes that is the beauty of the immersion school because it gives more than the just the basics of education, but it teaches the culture. "They bring, by teaching those abc's, by teaching the numbers, they're mixing it with the culture." Then she feels that everything that happens at school should be enhanced and reinforced in the home. "I do at home have the responsibility to whatever the school gets, whatever the school gives to enhance that...to take those tools and ensure the kids know that this is the way." Since her husband speaks Yupik, he is able to communicate with their son at home and the son in return teaches them a new word each day that he learns at school.

In regards to bilingualism, she feels that it is important for her son to be able to communicate with her family in Israel and to be able to communicate with his Yupik family in the Bethel region. She describes how the differences between the two languages may help further define and be proud of who they are. "I want to believe that because of the differences, when we talk about it, is that they will accept themselves." And finally she goes on to say, "I think that if schools offer that [language classes] you have to choose it. It's almost like someone is giving you gold on a plate...take it!"

**AE2:** Ayaprun parent two is a Yupik woman who is married to a Yupik man. Both her and her husband speak the Yupik language. Her husband is from a strong Yupik speaking village. She is between the age of 40 and 45 years of age. She attended the Bethel schools and then went off to college and completed her Bachelor in Science degree. They have two boys who attended ME school and one girl who they placed at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik. She placed the two boys at ME because she heard that the immersion school teaches in Yupik, but then the students get tested in English. "Well, they teach Yup'ik but they test in English and I was uncomfortable with that thought." She uses English and some Yupik in the home and finds herself using Yupik the most when she goes to the village or wants to say something in secret to her husband. The reasons that she chose Ayaprun Elitnaurvik for her daughter were:

- 1) "My daughter picked it."
- 2) "My daughter seems smart enough to handle it."
- 3) "My husband and I agreed together that we wanted her to go to Immersion."

She feels that Ayaprun was the better choice for her daughter because her daughter told her that she wanted to learn the Yup'ik language and go to the school that her friend taught at [Ayaprun Elitnaurvik]. Her daughter also recognized that there were two different schools and that she wanted to go to the one that her brother's friend went to.

The second reason she picked the school was because she thinks her daughter will be able to handle learning the language and still do well on the English tests. I that she was referring to the standardized tests that are given to all the students beginning in third grade. That is the main reason she did not place her two boys in the immersion school in the first place. This demonstrates to me the negative impact of standardized tests that are given only in English and the pressure that they put on parents who want their child to learn their Native language in school. "You know, how well would the children during that age, if they are being taught fully in Yup'ik, how well are they going to understand the test questions if they are in English." This also goes along with the idea that a person has to be gifted in order to learn another language. The third reason she placed her daughter in the school was the discussion she had with her husband regarding the tradition of naming their daughter after his late mom. The

Yupik people believe that when a child is named after someone, that their spirit is in that person and it is important to stay close to the traditions of that person. The late grandma was very traditional and therefore it became important for them to place their daughter in the immersion school so as not to stray from the culture. "We didn't want her to go too far from the traditions and stay close to the traditions of her culture."

She believes that the school is responsible for teaching her children that there are different ways and opportunities out there for them, and that it is up to them to choose what they want to do without any kind of limits. "Teaching children all the different aspects of life and influencing them and teaching them the different ways they can go..." When defining success for her children she says that it has to do with self-happiness and feeling satisfied in the environment in which a person lives.

In regards to language and culture in the schools, she feels that the schools should teach all the different cultures and help students understand that everyone brings their own set of values and traditional beliefs and that there is not just one culture. "We live in the old traditional atmosphere as well as were bombarded with the white culture."

She also goes on and explains how modern conveniences have changed the way things used to be. "We've got technology...we've got the conveniences of modern living and so everything is not fully traditional." When discussing the role of the home in the teaching of language and culture, she responded by saying that it is up to each family what they want to teach or pass on to their children. She explains how she brought up

her first child to speak Yupik as his first language in the home. However, when she entered him at ME school, he was frustrated and felt like an outsider to the other students because he realized that he understood and spoke differently than the other students. He would yell at the kids when they couldn't understand him and she started to question why she taught him the language." I was like trying to evaluate what am I doing to this poor child, I'm teaching him Yupik in this white mans environment." However, now she does have regrets in placing her two boys at ME and wishes she had placed them at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik so that they could speak Yupik." I actually do have some regrets that the boys, I didn't let the boys go through immersion."

In regards to her thoughts about bilingualism, she believes that it may delay a person from learning English, but does not feel like it holds a person back from being successful in school. "I think it delays it, but not...holding them back." She also mentions that she has seen too many Yupik's [bilinguals] become successful in the white mans environment, so she understands that it does not prevent anyone from succeeding. She realizes its importance and hopes that her daughter will revitalize the language in the home and help push her sons to learn Yup'ik. Another interesting observation she made had to do with the way in which language separates or divides her from her children. "I realize I am able to speak in this culture that separates him out of it." She also goes on to say that if she lived in the village, she knows that her children would be bilingual, but because they live in Bethel, there is less support to keep the language alive and more external helps is needed.

In closing, she expressed how happy she had the option to choose the immersion school by living in Bethel. She mentioned that there has been good success and wishes that she would have placed all of her children in the school. She described her experience the first time she attended one of Ayaprun's graduations with her boys and she could see the look on their faces that they wished they could have been a part of that school. "I think he could see the value in watching how the children interact closely with the family, the parents, and with the elders."

**AE3:** Ayaprun parent number three is half Yupik and half Caucasian man whose first language is English. He is between the age of 35 and 40 years of age. He is married to a Yupik woman from the same village that he grew up in. They both are bilingual and speak primarily Yupik with some English in the home to their four children. He attended school at a Yupik First Language (YFL) school where Yupik was taught the first three years. He graduated from high school in the village and took two years of college. Three out of his four children attended the Ayaprun Elitnaurvik School, with the exception of their son who was put at ME school because he was a delayed speaker and English was his language of choice. The reasons he chose Ayaprun Elitnaurvik for his daughter were:



1) "Yupik is the first language and she is pretty fluent in it. She also knows enough English to get her by. I went to school in Yupik my primary years also."

2) "The Yupik values that we hold are important and with the values. Respect is an important part that is taught through the Yupik language."

3) "Bilingualism seems to bring an edge of advanced problem solving, in my opinion. They can use two different languages to solve a problem and one language can feed off the other language."

He feels that Ayaprun is the choice for his daughter because her first language is Yupik and she is fluent in the language. She knows how to speak in sentence format because they spoke to her since she was a baby. She can also communicate effectively the English language. He also believes that the Yupik values that he and his wife hold are very important for his children to learn. Based on his experience with one boy attending the English only school and the other attending Ayaprun, he says, "The one who went through the Yupik [school] has more respect towards authoritative figures and more respect to the environment than his older brother."

This parallels right along with my experience when comparing my two sons and how they differ in personality. He also believes that bilingualism is more advanced because a person has to think in two different languages. "I can think in two different languages. And I can think back and then translate in my mind and then develop

solutions in English based on Yup'ik that goes through my mind." This agrees with what research says about the cognitive benefits that occur when a person acquires a second language. He also found that the communication between him and the teachers were better at Ayaprun with his younger son, because they sent regular newsletters. However, with his older son, he noticed that once his son moved to Kilbuck, there was hardly any communication from the teacher or the school.

He feels that the school is responsible for giving his children the knowledge that they need to learn. "Giving them the basic knowledge that they need to get at that age. Giving them a backbone basically for what they need to learn."

Success for his children means doing the best that they possibly can do or whatever they choose to do. He also mentions that another part of success is representing the family and community in a positive way, so that no negative things will come back to you. "Part of being successful is showing and representing your family or your community in the things that you do, so that there is no negative things that come back to you.." This can be describes as "Yuuyaraq" which means the Yupik way of life that believes if a person is positive and does good deeds for other people and respects the animals and land, that person will be rewarded. On the contrary, if a person is negative and treats others [people, animals, or land] badly, then bad things will occur.

He believes that the role of the school in the education about language and culture is important. He thinks that it is good to learn the Yupik language in school and to talk in Yupik. It is also important that the school teaches bits and pieces of the culture, especially the hands-on stuff that are still being practiced today. He also believes that the home should be an extension of school in the teaching of the language and culture. "If we want the school to do those things, then we should be doing those things to at home." For example, he speaks to his children in Yupik most of the time at home. He also takes his kids hunting and fishing and his wife cuts fish in the summer. "Maybe even do more than what we ask of the school."

In regards to bilingualism, he believes that it is important. He says "seems like there is more thinking outside the box that can be created by being bilingual and being able to come up with more solutions to potential problems." Bilingualism is also useful to him in communication with his people when he goes back to the village, or when he has conversations with people from the village as part of his job. He has also found it beneficial when conducting orientations or translating lease agreements and all the other forms that needs to be signed by his clients.

**AE4:** Ayaprun parent number four is a Yup'ik woman from a nearby village. She is single and between the age of 35 and 40 years old. She and her partner have two children together. She grew up and went to school in the village where her parents raised her to speak Yup'ik. She graduated from high school and went on to get her

college degree. English is the primary language spoken in the home with some Yup'ik.

She chose Ayaprun Elitnaurvik for the following reasons:

- 1) "I want my child to establish a strong identity Yugtun by learning the language and culture."
- 2) "I teach at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik."
- 3) "It's an awesome school to be in."

She feels that Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is the better choice for her son because she believes that it will help him develop a stronger identity of who he is versus if he went to Kilbuck or ME School. As a teacher of the school, she explains how the school represents Yuuyaraq, which is how a person should behave according to the Yup'ik worldview. She describes the special environment where the majority of the teachers are Yup'ik with strong identities who have the same history and background." all of us Native teachers with that kind of exact same history makes us stronger in our pursuit to make sure we have a strong school and strong children and strong leaders in the future." She also feels that this school environment helps form a child's identity and brings them closer to who they really are as a Yup'ik person. "...knowing that they [teachers] are as much Yup'ik as I am and having put him [her son] in that teaching environment also forms identity..."

When asked about the responsibility of the schools, she feels that the school is responsible for providing a safe and comfortable environment for her child. She also believes that the school should help teach values like how to be respectful along with common family beliefs. Success to parent four means knowing who you are and where you come from so that he can do whatever he sets out to do. "You have to know your ancestry, you have to know who your people were, and to know how strong they were in their beliefs.." She also wants him to have a lot of pride and courage to be who he is.

In regards to the role of the school in teaching the language and culture, she believes that the school should reaffirm what goes on at home using the language and vocabulary. She realizes that the school has everything to do with the language and culture because it is a Yup'ik immersion school. "What our school tries to do is we try to create a whole person, not just reading, writing, and math, but you know going into sometimes the spiritual aspect of it and trying to connect with the child."

When discussing the role of the home in teaching language and culture, she believes that the home life should reflect what is happening in the school. There should not be a separation between the two. Families need to reinforce what happens at school both academically and emotionally. She describes how her family practices the cultural aspects by going hunting, fishing, and berry picking. During these activities, she talks about what's proper and what's not.

In regards to bilingualism, she believes that it is very important because it is a part of who she is. However, he goes on to describe how she struggled with her identity of being Yup'ik when she was in high school and mentions a time when she didn't want anyone to know that she could speak Yugtun. Then how she became even more confused in college when trying to fit into the kass"aq world where she didn't belong. She describes the moment when the words of her grandfather came to her, "Never forget who you are and where you came from." Then she realized, "I can't be anyone else. I can't pretend to be anyone else. And when I go home, I can't deny whom I am. This is who I am..."

**AE5:** Ayaprun parent number 5 is a Caucasian male from the Midwest. He is married to a Caucasian woman and has two children. His is between the age of 40 and 45 years old. English is the primary language spoken in the home. The reasons that he and his wife picked Ayaprun Elitnaurvik were because:

- 1) They learned that it was beneficial for language development to learn a second language early.
- 2) Two families and close friends recommended the school based on their own experience with the school.

He feels that Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is a better choice for his daughter because of the benefits that she will get from learning a second language. When speaking to a friend, "...she said that there is a big advantage to students later if they learn a second language early, no matter what it is." He also described a family in town who recommended it based on their own experience of children attending the school. "She said that aside from just the language, the type of things that they learn about, like maybe they'll be cutting up the bird sometimes or processing birds or animals and how they take care of the food." Another family discussed how the school forced his monolingual children to pay better attention to the teacher in school so they could understand and learn the language. Several years later, he has seen the cognitive benefits through his kids' high test scores when they moved to the states.

He believes that the responsibility of the school is to provide a safe environment and to learn how to speak in Yup'ik. "I expect them [daughters] to learn some Yup'ik words and eventually they'll be able to communicate in Yup'ik." When defining success, he says "For me success would be to have her go and enjoy it [school] and learn to enjoy the learning process. That would be great success."

When discussing the role of the school in the education about language and culture, he feels that the school plays a major role in the education about language and culture, since she is in the Yup'ik immersion program. When discussing the role of the home in the teaching of language and culture, he hopes to get some help from his friends who

are Yup'ik, since neither he nor his wife are Yup'ik. He also mentions how if she went to another school, this would not even be brought up. "Well, if she was going to a regular school, I wouldn't think about that at all, but in this case, I would expect to learn about the Yup'ik language and culture."

In regards to bilingualism, he believes that learning a second language is beneficial because of the cognitive benefits. "Learning that second language early, there is a big advantage to that later on. I guess in the language center in the brain...If you don't use them now then you lose them and it makes it harder to learn a language much later." After hearing his comments, he seemed very informed about the research and what happens in the brain when a second language is being learned. He also mentioned his excitement about his daughter learning the language and the culture at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik.

**ME1:** ME School parent number one is half Yupik and half Caucasian. She was born and raised in the town of Bethel. She is a single mother who is between the age of 20 and 25 years old. She and her partner have two children together. She and her sisters attended ME school and lived in Anchorage for a period of time. She was taught some Yup'ik by her late grandmother and marked that she was bilingual on the questionnaire, but in the interview stated that she did not take the time to really know the language and does not speak it at home. The three reasons she chose ME school for her oldest son were:



- 1) "All of my younger relatives and myself have all attended this school, so its what I chose for my child."
- 2) "This school has a much larger learning area, more choice, and options."
- 3) "I know the school. I'd like my child to attend based on personal experience."

She felt that ME was a better choice because it has existed longer than the immersion school and seems more suitable for her son. "I mean, it's always been there [ME school] and the immersion school has arrived somewhat years after, but the ME School seems more relative to my life right now." She mentioned that she didn't take the time to learn the Yup'ik language from her grandma and therefore, was not ready to place him in the immersion school. She seemed to think that he would have a hard time paying attention if he went to the other school. "I don't know the whole bilingual. I just wanted my son to be more focused right now." She liked that ME focuses more on English and has all the stuff her son likes, which included more space, supplies, and computers. She also heard that children learn to read faster at ME school. "Well, I know they got the computers over there and they learn to read right away. I was told that they learn to read in kindergarten."

She feels that the school is responsible for teaching the requirements that are expected at each grade level. "Probably, just going by the learning requirements, what they

should know by the end of the year." In the Bethel schools, each grade has phase level expectations that every student must pass before moving onto the next grade. She also feels that language and culture should be taught in the schools so it won't die out and seems to be aware of globalization and language loss when she says, "...but the whole culture and the Native way and the language and...that should still be around, you know... because you know, one day it just may die out. How many languages have died out? Even our culture...?"

When discussing the role of teaching language and culture, she feels that parents need to be involved at home and take advantage of the culture in which they live as a matter of survival. She remembers spending a lot of time with her grandma helping with subsistence activities and traveling to a village to help cut fish and pick berries "You are going to have to learn it [Yupik culture] anyways. I mean, that's how you survive around here, my family and me. You just hold it in our hands."

In regards to bilingualism, she believes that it is important to most people and useful in some of the stronger speaking villages, but chooses not to take advantage of it yet, but may consider it in the future. "...going to [names village] in the summer, you know that is how they communicate. And you know language is passed on forever and even animals understand language." She also recognizes some of the cognitive benefits that are involved in learning another language. "...but being bilingual...you have greater chances of your learning abilities." She used to think that bilingualism might hold a

person back, but no longer feels that way. Instead she says, "I just feel like it is really strong in your family, then you know you are going to go for it." Based on this comment, I feel that ME parent number one feels that one must already have to be strong in the Yupik language, if they are going to place their child in the immersion school.

**ME2:** ME parent number two is a Yupik man whose first language is Yupik. He is married to a Yupik woman and has two children. He was raised in a strong Yupik speaking village and is between the age of 30 and 35 years old. He received most of his education in the village and spent a few years in the Bethel schools. He remembers how difficult it was for him to learn English. Both him and his wife speak primarily English in the home, and speak mainly Yupik when he goes back to the village. They try to teach the language to their two kids at home, but the kids only know English and do not understand them. He originally placed his older son in the immersion school, but took him out of the program after one or two years because he felt that his son was "getting away with too many things in that school." Now he has a place his five-year-old daughter at ME School for the following reasons:

- 1) "Better learning"
- 2) "Faster learning"
- 3) "Challenging for the student"

He feels that ME was a better choice because they have better materials and is more challenging than the other school. "They probably have a lot better materials that they go by and it's a lot more challenging than the other school." He also feels that she would learn faster at ME because they raised her using the English language and that placing her at the immersion school would slow her down in the learning process. "You know we raised her umm...using English language and not Yup'ik and that would be should be learning a lot faster than putting her in the other school [Ayaprun]." This is contrary to what research has stated when discussing the benefits of second language acquisition.

When discussing the role of the school in the teaching of the language and culture, he makes an interesting observation when he says, "Like if it's in a village, they lack English, they should have a lot more English school, and if it's like here in Bethel where Yup'ik [language] lacks, they should have more Yup'ik classes.". So he believes that the parents are the first teachers of their children and that language should be taught in the home. On the other hand, I found this to be an interesting observation made by him, however, it is contradictory to what he is doing with his own children in Bethel. "Yeah, sometimes I catch myself talking English to go do chores and what not, and think about and tell them to do that in Yup'ik and they say, "What?" However, at one point during the interview he does seem to realize this when he says, "To start off with, I should have taught my kids how to speak Yup'ik before English."

He feels that the school is responsible for meeting the state standards but should also require vocational training for students in high school so that they will be better prepared for life. He would also like to see teachers and schools be more strict in their approach so that students can learn more. When he defines success, he relates it to attendance and completing a grade or phase in the school or whatever they do that they succeed in. He remembers feeling successful in school when he was taught how to make a small wooden sled during cultural heritage week.

In regards to bilingualism, he believes that it is both important and useful. Especially when he goes back to his home village or when he is at the store and elders need help communicating with the cashier. On the other hand, he believes that it may hold a child back from learning. He says, "Probably to a point it holds a child back. You know cause they're trying to learn both languages. They're trying to learn Yup'ik and on top of that, they're trying to learn English."

**ME3:** ME parent number three is a single woman who is full Yupik. She is from a strong Yupik speaking village where Yupik was her first language. She is between the age of 35 and 40. She grew up in the village speaking to both of her parents in Yupik. She enjoyed going to school where she learned how to speak English for the first time, along with the help of some of her cousins who moved to the village from Bethel. However, she remembers having to always miss the last part of school to help her grandmother at spring camp.

She tries to speak to her daughter at home in Yupik, but she understands very little.

The daughter's father can only speak English. The reasons she wrote for choosing ME school were:

- 1) "want to her to learn and what's best for her"
- 2) "want her to know other students"

She felt like ME was a better choice because she wanted her to learn English first instead of Yupik. She felt some pressure to put her in the Yupik school from different people, but because her daughter never attended preschool or head start, she felt that it was important for her to learn English. She also mentioned that she rarely goes out socially and wanted her daughter to make more friends at school.

She feels that the school is responsible for educating her child like in reading and math. She is amazed how much her daughter has learned so far in kindergarten and how well she can read and count her numbers. She feels that her daughter is successful in school because she knows her alphabet, can write her name, spell, read, and do math.

She feels that the school is also responsible for teaching Yupik. She describes an incident when her daughter was so happy to learn the Yupik word for yellow "asiqilik"

when she brought a paper home from her Yupik class. The Yupik class at ME school lasts thirty minutes and students go there twice a week where they do art projects, sing Yupik songs, and occasionally Yupik dance. It is not a class where second language acquisition can occur but where students learn the numbers, colors, and days of the week.

ME parent three feels that the culture should be taught at home where she teaches her daughter how to make aqutak [Eskimo ice cream] and takes her to fish camp to cut fish. When reflecting on one of her most positive school memories, she talks about her Yupik teacher and her Yupik class as being one of her favorite classes in school. This goes right along with what research says about the importance of teaching culturally relevant themes that students can make connections with and its positive impact with the learner.

In regards to bilingualism, she believes that it is useful and does not hold a person back from learning. "Yeah, it would be useful now, I guess. Since they're saying our culture is disappearing." She also feels that it is important that her daughter grows up knowing some Yupik, so she'll know and understand what other people are saying. I find it interesting that she used the word "some", which leads me to believe that she still feels that English is more important to learn than her own language.

**ME4:** ME parent number four is a Yupik man whose first language is Yupik. He was raised in a strong Yupik speaking village and is between the age of 35 and 40 years old. He attended school in the village and completed the twelfth grade. He is married and has four children, who have all attended ME school. His kids mostly speak English at home, but he speaks Yupik half the time in the home and his children can understand the language. He placed his daughter at ME school for the following reasons:

- 1) "All of my kids went to this school and they did good."
- 2) "I think English is getting important in our age of school and work for the future cause they can learn Yupik at the house."
- 3) "I think the staff is doing a good job trying to help the kids for the future."

He feels that ME school was a better choice because all of his children attended the school and it has prepared them well for the upper grade levels. He also stressed the importance of his children to learn English in order to get better jobs for the future. He recognizes the importance of learning the Yupik language, but feels that it should be taught at home. "Yupik is important, too, so we don't want to lose the language, but it seems like a lot of people have to go out to some cities to work and they probably have to know more English..." Finally he thinks the staff at ME is working hard to help the kids be successful in reading and writing.



He believes that the school's responsibility to educate involves learning all the words. "That's what teachers do and I know it's hard work but they got to really kind of push them." He relates being successful to homework and the importance of getting it done. "...if they say they already finished it [homework], that means that there kind of successful in school, already or learning what to expect."

When discussing the role of education about language and culture in the schools, he mentions how he'd like to see ME school teach more Yupik during the week. "I told one of my teachers at a parent conference if they maybe do it almost every day, that language and culture stuff." This was an interesting contrast to what he said at the beginning of the interview where he thought the language should be taught at the home.

When discussing the role of education about language and culture in the home, he describes some of the subsistence activities that his family does together. He describes how e tries to take his kids out berry picking and hunting. "In the winter time, I take them out hunting and pretty much throughout the year...we try to talk more in Yup'ik at the house ..." However, he said that they often reply in English. This makes me wonder how much Yup'ik is actually being spoken in the home, if they respond in English. Finally, he seems to recognize that the culture is changing from when he was a child. "When we were growing up, there was not much tv or we didn't have no video games. It was pretty much playing outside."

In regards to bilingualism, he believes that it is important and useful when he goes back to his village or for translation with elders. However, he reinforces the fact that English is even more important to get jobs since they all require the English language. His emphasis on learning English to get better jobs is contrary to the fact that in the Bethel region there are even more jobs available to those that speak the Yupik language, and it is a clear advantage to those that are bilingual. He does go on to say that bilingualism may hold a person back, but didn't think it affected his learning or slowed him down. I found this to be an interesting contradiction.

**ME5:** ME parent number five is Yupik woman who is from a village near Bethel. She grew up speaking both Yupik and English to her parents and relatives. She is single but is living with the Caucasian father of their two children. She attended all twelve years of school in the village and is between the age of 35 and 40 years of age. English is the primary language spoken in the home and both children do not understand Yupik. The older sister also attends ME school. She chose ME school for her son based on the following reasons:

- 1) She discussed with other parents that had children in the school how they or their kids liked going to ME.
- 2) The majority of his friends were going to ME school and she wanted him to be comfortable.

3) When she visited the school, the staff was very nice and helpful and was able to answer any questions that she had.

She feels that ME was a better choice because she spoke to other parents and they liked the school. She also discussed the decision with her partner and they might be moving somewhere so he thought it was important for their child to go to the English school because they're mostly going to be talking in English. It was also important to her that many of his friends were attending the same school and she felt very comfortable when she visited the school. The staff was nice and helpful and was able to answer her questions and concerns. She was very pleased when she found out that there were Yupik classes during the week. She said, "I was happy to know that they had a Yupik class... so they both can learn English and Yupik."

She feels like the school is responsible for teaching the basics of reading, writing, and math. She is happy that there is Yupik class for her children to learn the language. When asked about the role of the home in the education of language and culture, she responded, "I feel bad because I am not using those skills...I hardly speak Yupik to my kids..." She finds herself speaking Yupik only to her relatives or when she visits her home village. One of her most positive school memories in school occurred during cultural week when she went out to jig for fish, made wooden spoons, and sewed Eskimo dolls out of skins.

In regards to bilingualism, she believes that bilingualism is important and does not hold a person back from learning English or being successful. She feels that ME school will help teach her children how to speak Yupik so that they can speak to their grandparents. However, when asked about her children's knowledge of the language, she replied that they knew very little. "They'll do Yupik songs or count to ten in Yupik." This is another example of how ineffective the Yupik program is at ME school at teaching the language, but tends to focus more on songs, crafts, and the culture. This is why so many indigenous languages are dying in our educational school system. Parents are lead to believe that the language is being taught in the school because there is a class offered, but it is not a language class, but a cultural class. There is a big difference between the two, but many parents are not aware of this.

## **Appendix 2: Adult Consent Form**

### **English or Yugtun: A Parental Choice**

#### **Description of the Study:**

You are being asked to take part in a study about parental choice. The goal of this study is to learn about your reasons for the placement of your child at ME School or Ayaprun Elitnaurvik School. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a parent of a kindergarten student.

If you decide to be part of this study you will be interviewed about your reasons for choosing one school over the other. Other issues covered during the interview may include your own language history and how you view language and bilingualism. The interviews shouldn't take more than an hour. With your consent, I would like to tape record our conversations to guarantee accuracy for my study.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

If any of my questions are too personal or upsetting in any way, you are not required to answer. Please feel free to redirect our discussion at any time. You may stop participating in the study at anytime. There is no penalty for withdrawing from the study.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The data derived from this study could be used in reports, presentations, and publications but neither you nor your child will be individually identified. Your name, the name of your child, your child's friends, and relatives will NOT be used in anything I write. Pseudonyms will be used in everything I write.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time without any penalty. You may contact either myself or Patrick Marlow using the information below if you choose to withdraw from the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions now, feel free to ask me. If you have questions later, you may contact me or my advisor, Patrick Marlow.

Jill C. Hoffman / 907-543-3856 / fsjch11@uaf.edu

Patrick Marlow / 907-474-7446 / ffpem@uaf.edu

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I \_\_\_\_\_ (print your name) agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature/Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jill Hoffman, Researcher

**If appropriate:**

Please check the box that applies:

☐ I may be tape recorded.

☐ I may not be tape recorded.

### **Appendix 3: School Choice Questionnaire**

**Purpose of study:**

You are being asked to take part in a study about parental choice. The goal of this study is to learn about your reasons for the placement of your child at ME School or Ayaprun Elitnaurvik School. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a parent of a kindergarten student.

If you decide to be part of this study you will be interviewed about your reasons for choosing one school over the other. Other issues covered during the interview may include your own language history and how you view language and bilingualism. The interviews shouldn't take more than an hour. With your consent, I would like to tape record our conversations to guarantee accuracy for my study.

**Confidentiality:**

The data derived from this study could be used in reports, presentations, and publications but neither you nor your child will be individually identified. Your name, the name of your child, your child's friends, and relatives will NOT be used in anything I write. Pseudonyms will be used in everything I write.

1. What school are you placing your child in? \_\_\_\_ Ayaprun / \_\_\_\_ME
2. What are some of the reasons why you are choosing that school?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
3. Are any of your other children currently going to the same school? \_\_Yes/ \_\_No

4. What is your ethnicity?  
☐ Alaska Native  
☐ Caucasian  
☐ Asian  
☐ Hispanic  
☐ Philipino  
☐ Other
5. What language(s) are spoken at your home?  
☐ English  
☐ English & *some* Yup'ik/Cup'ik  
☐ Yup'ik/Cup'ik & *some* English  
☐ English & Other \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you consider yourself bilingual?  
☐ No  
☐ Yes (Yup'ik-Cup'ik/English)  
☐ Yes (\_\_\_\_\_/English)
7. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_  
a. How old are you?  
Under 20   20-25   25-30   30-35   35-40   40-45   45-50
8. Are you single, married, or divorced?
9. Where did you go to school? \_\_\_\_\_ Where did your spouse go to school? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What was the highest grade you completed? \_\_\_\_\_ (incl. college if relevant)



11. What language(s) did your parents speak to you when you were growing up?

\_\_\_ English

\_\_\_ English & *some* Yup'ik

\_\_\_ Yup'ik

\_\_\_ Yup'ik & *some* English

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Would you be willing to further discuss school choice at a later date if asked?

\_\_\_ Yes / \_\_\_ No

*If you answered yes to #10, please fill out a contact card.*

### **School Choice Contact Card:**

Jill Hoffman may contact me to discuss *school choice* further.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

The best time/place to contact me is:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **Appendix 4: School Choice Interview Script**

I want to thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. We've already gone over the informed consent form. I want to take just a minute to see if you have any questions for me. As I explained before, I am researching the topic of parental choice and I want to find out the reasons why you are choosing to place your son/daughter at ME School or Ayaprun School.

Before we get started, I just want to remind you that your participation is completely voluntary. You can quit at any time. If you quit, the tapes and transcripts from our conversations will be destroyed.

\*If you are ready...is it OK for me to start the tape recorder?

[If they are uncomfortable with the tape recorder, I will rely on notes only.]

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The following are a list of topics that will be used to guide the interview:

##### **CHOICE**

On the questionnaire, you gave the following reasons of why you chose \_\_\_\_ school.

Can you tell me more about....

##### **PERSONAL HISTORY**

On the questionnaire, you describe your own language use and history. I would like to take a few minutes to discuss it further...

Do you remember when you first started to speak English? What was that like?

Tell me about your family. Do you come from a big family? What was that like growing up?

## SCHOOL

What do you think the school is responsible for in the education of your child?

What does success mean to you and for your child?

What role (if any) should the school play in education of/about language and culture?

What role (if any) should the home play in education of/about language and culture?

Tell me your most positive school memory?

Tell me about your most negative school memory?

What was it like learning English in school? What was it like going to a YFL school?

## LANGUAGE USE

You said on your questionnaire you consider yourself bilingual....

What does it mean to be Bilingual?

Is Bilingualism important/useful/beneficial?

Does bilingualism hold a person back from learning English/succeeding in school?

How does a person become bilingual?

When do you find yourself using Yugstun most? Can you tell me more about that?

You said on your questionnaire that you use \_\_\_\_ language at home with your child...

What language does your child speak at home most of the time?

Does your child know/use Yugstun?

Please describe your child's knowledge of Yugstun.